

**Council of the District of Columbia**  
**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY**  
**MEMORANDUM**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

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**TO:** Nyasha Smith, Secretary of the Council  
**FROM:** Charles Allen, Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
**RE:** Closing Hearing Record  
**DATE:** August 11, 2022

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CA

Dear Ms. Smith,

Please find attached copies of the Hearing Notice, Agenda and Witness List, and testimony for the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety's July 7, 2022 Public Hearing on B24-0300, the "Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2022". The following witnesses testified at the hearing or submitted written testimony to the Committee:

i. Public Witnesses

1. Corina Garay, Public Witness
2. Jose Barrios, President, D.C. Latino Caucus
3. Patricia Eguino, Chair of Outreach, D.C. Latino Caucus
4. Kishan Putta, Chair, Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus, D.C. Democratic Party
5. Robb Dooling, Commissioner, ANC 6A06
6. Soledad Miranda, Dulce Hogar Cleaning Co-op
7. Megan Macaraeg, Organizing Director, Beloved Community Incubator
8. Kush Kharod, Public Witness
9. Abel Amene, Public Witness
10. Angela Salazar, Vendors United Food Co-op
11. Jen Jenkins, Policy Advocate, Legal Aid Society for the District of Columbia
12. Dante O'Hara, Lead Organizer, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
13. Carol Rosenblatt, Labor & Outreach Coordinator, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
14. German Galdamaz, Representative, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
15. Dieter Lehmann Morales, Commissioner, ANC 1A02
16. Max Ewart, Commissioner, ANC 1B07
17. Trupti Patel, Commissioner, ANC 2A03
18. Beau Finley, Commissioner, ANC 3C04
19. Ahmad Abu-Khalaf, Public Witness

20. Keshini Ladduwahetty, Public Witness
21. Michael Brennan, Public Witness
22. Alida Austin, Public Witness
23. Martín Miguel Fernández, Public Witness
24. Eskedar Girmash, Public Witness
25. Abel Nunez, Executive Director, Central American Resource Center
26. Eric Goulet, Public Witness
27. Rehana Mohammed, Vice Chair, Board of Directors, The DC Center for the LGBT Community
28. Tam Vo, Public Witness
29. Tamira Benitez, Public Witness
30. Victoria Yuen, Public Witness
31. Joanne Fleming, Representative, D.C. Statehood Green Party
32. Alex Dodds, Chair, D.C. for Democracy
33. Arturo Griffiths, Representative, D.C. Voting Rights Coalition
34. John Payne, Representative, Sanctuary DMV
35. Alana Eichner, D.C. Lead Organizer, DC Chapter, National Domestic Workers Alliance
36. Aura Angelica, Public Witness
37. Samantha Delgado, Public Witness
38. Katherine Ebright, Public Witness
39. Mike Warburton, Organizer, Sunrise D.C.
40. Yannik Omictin, Commissioner, ANC 2A01
41. Lois Athey, Public Witness
42. Cybele Mayes-Osterman, Representative, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
43. Kathy Chiron, President, League of Women Voters DC
44. Peter Wood, Commissioner, ANC 1C03
45. Fernanda Ruiz, Home Visiting Director, Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc.
46. Joel Causey, Chairperson, ANC 2A
47. Jim Knight, President and CEO, Jubilee Housing
48. Arin Owens, Public Witness
49. Rose Ippolito, Organizer, Sunrise DC

- 50. Kate Finman, Public Witness
  - 51. Jesus “Jesse” Garcia, State Director, LULAC District of Columbia
  - 52. Sauleh Siddiqui, Commissioner, ANC 3C05
  - 53. Zachary Ferguson, Public Witness
- ii. Government Witness
    - 1. Monica Holman Evans, Executive Director, Board of Elections

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004**

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**COUNCILMEMBER CHARLES ALLEN, CHAIRPERSON  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY**

**ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC HEARING ON**

**B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”**

**Thursday, July 7, 2022, 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Virtual Hearing via Zoom**

**To Watch Live:**

<https://www.facebook.com/CMcharlesallen/>

On Thursday, July 7, 2022, Councilmember Charles Allen, Chairperson of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, will convene a public hearing to consider Bill 24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”. The hearing will be conducted virtually via Zoom from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The stated purpose of B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”, is to amend the District of Columbia Election Code of 1955 to expand the definition of the term “qualified elector” to include permanent residents for the purpose of local elections.

The Committee invites the public to provide oral and written testimony. Public witnesses seeking to provide oral testimony at the Committee’s hearing must thoroughly review the following instructions:

- Anyone wishing to provide oral testimony must email the Committee at [judiciary@dccouncil.us](mailto:judiciary@dccouncil.us) with their name, telephone number, organizational affiliation, and title (if any), by the **close of business on Friday, July 1.**
- The Committee will approve witnesses’ registrations based on the total time allotted for public testimony. The Committee will also determine the order of witnesses’ testimony.
- Representatives of organizations will be allowed a maximum of five minutes for oral testimony, and individuals (and any subsequent representatives of the same organizations) will be allowed a maximum of three minutes. In order to accommodate additional public witnesses, the Committee may reduce witnesses’ allotted time for testimony but will inform witnesses if it plans to do so.
- Witnesses are not permitted to yield their time to, or substitute their testimony for, the testimony of another individual or organization.

- If possible, witnesses should submit a copy of their testimony electronically in advance to [judiciary@dccouncil.us](mailto:judiciary@dccouncil.us).
- Witnesses who anticipate needing language interpretation are requested to inform the Committee as soon as possible, but no later than five business days before the hearing. The Committee will make every effort to fulfill timely requests; however, requests received fewer than five business days before the hearing may not be fulfilled.

For witnesses who are unable to testify at the hearing, written statements will be made part of the official record. Copies of written statements should be submitted to the Committee at [judiciary@dccouncil.us](mailto:judiciary@dccouncil.us). **The record will close at the end of the business day on Friday, July 22.**

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY  
AGENDA & WITNESS LIST  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004**

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**COUNCILMEMBER CHARLES ALLEN, CHAIRPERSON  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY**

**ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC HEARING ON**

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**To Watch Live:**

<https://www.facebook.com/CMcharlesallen/>

**AGENDA AND WITNESS LIST**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**II. OPENING REMARKS**

**III. WITNESS TESTIMONY**

**i. Public Witnesses**

**Panel 1**

1. Corina Garay, Public Witness
2. Jose Barrios, President, D.C. Latino Caucus
3. Patricia Eguino, Chair of Outreach, D.C. Latino Caucus
4. Kishan Putta, Chair, Asian and Pacific Islander Caucus, D.C. Democratic Party
5. Robb Dooling, Commissioner, ANC 6A06
6. Marilyn Miranda, Public Witness
7. Soledad Miranda, Dulce Hogar Cleaning Co-op
8. Angela Salazar, Vendors United Food Co-op
9. German Trinidad, Vendors United Food Co-op

10. Member, Vendors United
11. Megan Macaraeg, Organizing Director, Beloved Community Incubator
12. Kush Kharod, Public Witness
13. Abel Amene, Public Witness
14. Jen Jenkins, Policy Advocate, Legal Aid Society for the District of Columbia
15. Dante O'Hara, Lead Organizer, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
16. Carol Rosenblatt, Labor & Outreach Coordinator, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
17. Cybele Mayes-Osterman, Representative, Claudia Jones School for Political Education
18. German Galdamaz, Representative, Claudia Jones School for Political Education

Panel 2

19. Dieter Lehmann Morales, Commissioner, ANC 1A02
20. Max Ewart, Commissioner, ANC 1B07
21. Sabel Harris, Commissioner, ANC 1B12
22. Yannik Omictin, Commissioner, ANC 2A01
23. Trupti Patel, Commissioner, ANC 2A03
24. Alexandra Bailey, Commissioner, ANC 2F08
25. Beau Finley, Commissioner, ANC 3C04
26. Ahmad Abu-Khalaf, Public Witness
27. Keshini Ladduwahetty, Public Witness
28. Michael Brennan, Public Witness
29. Alida Austin, Public Witness

Panel 3

30. Eskedar Girmash, Public Witness
31. Martín Miguel Fernández, Public Witness
32. Tam Vo, Public Witness
33. Deirdre Brown, Public Witness
34. Eric Goulet, Public Witness
35. Tamira Benitez, Public Witness
36. Abel Nunez, Executive Director, Central American Resource Center
37. Liz Merrow, Public Witness

38. Rehana Mohammed, Vice Chair, Board of Directors, The DC Center for the LGBT Community

39. Victoria Yuen, Public Witness

Panel 4

40. Brianna McGowan, Organizer, Delicious Democracy

41. Alex Dodds, Chair, D.C. for Democracy

42. Joanne Fleming, Representative, D.C. Statehood Green Party

43. Sam Mather, Public Witness

44. Arturo Griffiths, Representative, D.C. Voting Rights Coalition

45. Lois Athey, Public Witness

46. Aura Angelica, Public Witness

47. John Payne, Representative, Sanctuary DMV

48. Katherine Ebright, Public Witness

49. Arin Owens, Public Witness

50. Alana Eichner, D.C. Lead Organizer, DC Chapter, National Domestic Workers Alliance

51. Ivana Mowry-Mora, Public Witness

Panel 5

52. Liz Mellow, Public Witness

53. Victoria Yuen, Public Witness

54. Samantha Delgado, Public Witness

55. Herbert Meisner, Public Witness

56. Bryanna Portillo, Public Witness

57. Mike Warburton, Organizer, Sunrise D.C.

ii. Government Witness

1. Monica Holman Evans, Executive Director, Board of Elections

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**



July 7, 2022

Mr. Charles Allen, Chairperson  
Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
VIA Live Testimony and Email

Good morning Committee Chairman Allen and the other members of this committee. I'm Jose Barrios, and I'm delivering my remarks today in my capacity as President of the Washington DC Latino Caucus and as the first generation child of immigrants. The Caucus urges this committee, in the strongest possible terms, to vote in favor of getting the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 out of committee and up for a full Council vote.

As the organization that promotes the political participation of the District's almost 70,000 Latinos, many of whom are permanent residents, we are keenly interested in passage of this bill. We consider it a game-changer in increasing the political power not only of Latinos, but of other immigrant communities that are so essential to the fabric and culture of our city.

According to the American Immigration Council, as of 2018 there were almost 98,000 foreign-born immigrants in the District, or about 14% of the population. The highest proportion is from El Salvador, with 11% of those immigrants, the next highest being 7 percent from Ethiopia. 55 percent of those 98,000 immigrants are not naturalized US citizens, meaning a substantial fraction of them are permanent residents with the remainder being undocumented, DACA, or TPS recipients.

One in six DC workers is an immigrant. Over 5000 immigrant business owners generate \$145 million in taxable business income a year. Immigrant households in the District pay over \$900 million dollars in federal taxes and over \$400 million in DC taxes every year.

Permanent residents are eligible to contribute to political campaigns. At the federal level, they can pay into and collect social security and get education benefits. They are eligible for Obamacare. They can also serve in our nation's armed forces.

Members of the Committee, I put it to you this way: if permanent residents are an essential part of our cultural fabric, if they support our economy as workers and entrepreneurs, if they pay large amounts of taxes, if their kids are in our schools, if they enjoy our parks and local events, if they can contribute to their preferred political candidates, and perhaps most importantly if they can die in service to our country, then they also deserve to be able to vote in local elections that matter to them.

Washington DC Latino Caucus | 1884 Columbia Road NW #714, Washington, D.C. 20009 | [information@dclc.org](mailto:information@dclc.org)

[www.dclatinocaucus.org](http://www.dclatinocaucus.org) | Twitter, Facebook, Instagram: @dclatinocaucus

One argument I've heard against this bill is that providing permanent residents the ability to vote would disincentivize them from seeking citizenship. I have seen absolutely no data to back up that claim. Even if it were true, I do not think that promoting federal citizenship should be a valid public policy objective for the DC Council. No other benefits, from affordable housing vouchers to health insurance, are denied as some sort of carrot or incentive for permanent residents to seek citizenship, and voting rights should be treated no differently. It's also possible that granting local voting rights might increase the desire to become citizens given the deeper community ties that voting permanent residents would develop.

I would ask the committee to consider how this bill also relates to DC statehood. To me, it is hypocrisy to demand statehood on the basis that lacking it disenfranchises District of Columbia residents, while at the same time turning a blind eye to members of our community that can't vote in local elections that deeply impact the community of which they are so much a part. We either support the enfranchisement of DC residents, or we don't.

In summary, I'm asking that members of this committee take the next step and move this bill forward. I'm appealing to all Councilmembers and particularly to Councilmember Bonds, who just spoke very positively about this bill, who has sponsored previous versions of this bill and who told the DC Latino Caucus on our recent endorsement questionnaire that she strongly supports this bill, to please join other members of the Council to get it out of committee after all these years of trying and get it to a full Council vote.

Because if you can be a permanent part of this city, participate in its lifeblood, and possibly even die in service to our city and country, then you deserve the right to vote in your local elections.

Thank you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jose Barrios', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jose Barrios, President  
Washington DC Latino Caucus



Government of the District of Columbia

## Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 6A06

July 7, 2022

Testimony in Support of the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021

Dear Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robb Dooling and I am the Commissioner for ANC 6A06, representing H Street NE. I support the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 that would give many of my constituents, including business owners, the right to vote in our elections. I also urge the Council to grant green card-holding permanent residents and non-citizens the right to vote in our elections. My district includes five of DC's favorite restaurants: Maketto, Stable DC, Biergarten Haus, Balangay, and Tony's Breakfast, all of which are immigrant-owned. Immigrants not only form 14% of the DC population, they form our economy, culture, and politics.

My partner, Dr. Tam Vo, is an immigrant from Vietnam. This hearing is his first time testifying. I am so proud of Tam: we have been together for almost three years and involved in DC politics throughout COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter. Tam is also a cancer researcher with 12 publications in peer-reviewed journals and he is leading national advocacy to further include gender and sexual minorities in healthcare. Finally, in politics, it is key to have a good sense of humor. That is why we are advocating for my partner Tam to have the right to not only vote for me - but also to vote against me - in ANC elections.

My best friend, Graham Forsey, is an immigrant from Canada. Graham has co-led the DC Association of the Deaf for the past four years. Graham successfully sued the Trump White House to force them to provide sign language interpreters for press conferences. Graham revolutionized accessibility for millions of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Americans and this new accessibility standard continues at the White House today.

Graham, Tam, and other immigrants also advocated for the DC Office for the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing, which just became our newest government agency last month. This is the first government agency in the world to have DeafBlind in its name. Immigrants like Graham and Tam made it possible. Despite their extraordinary contributions, Tam, Graham, and tens of thousands of other DC residents still lack the ability to make their most fundamental contribution: a vote in a local election. We ask you to correct this wrong. Thank you.

**Testimony of Jen Jenkins  
Policy Unit  
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia**

**Before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia**

**Public Hearing Regarding:**

**Bill 24-0300  
“Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”**

**July 7, 2022**

The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia<sup>1</sup> submits the following testimony in support of Bill 24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021.” The Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 seeks to allow D.C. residents who are lawfully admitted to the United States as permanent residents, also known as green card holders, to vote in D.C. elections. Under this bill, permanent residents would be able to vote in the electoral races for the District’s Mayor, the D.C. Council, the Board of Education, the Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and the Attorney General, as well as any initiative, referendum, recall, or charter referendum on a District ballot. This measure would have a tremendous and positive impact on the civic participation of D.C.’s local immigrant population and would return the right to vote, in part, to

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<sup>1</sup> The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia was formed in 1932 to “provide legal aid and counsel to indigent persons in civil law matters and to encourage measures by which the law may better protect and serve their needs.” Legal Aid is the oldest and largest general civil legal services program in the District of Columbia. Over the last 90 years, Legal Aid staff and volunteers have been making justice real – in individual and systemic ways – for tens of thousands of persons living in poverty in the District. The largest part of our work is comprised of individual representation in housing, domestic violence/family, public benefits, and consumer law. We also work on immigration law matters and help individuals with the collateral consequences of their involvement with the criminal justice system. From the experiences of our clients, we identify opportunities for court and law reform, public policy advocacy, and systemic litigation. More information about Legal Aid can be obtained from our website, [www.LegalAidDC.org](http://www.LegalAidDC.org), and our blog, [www.MakingJusticeReal.org](http://www.MakingJusticeReal.org).

permanent residents.<sup>2</sup> If this bill became law, permanent residents would be allowed and encouraged to vote, countering centuries of systemic racism, classism, and xenophobia in the United States and locally in the District.

The District has a long history of immigrant communities and, in making their homes here, immigrants contribute to the District's culture.<sup>3</sup> The District's immigration population has grown significantly since the 1990s, with immigrants now making up 17% of the District's population.<sup>4</sup> Out of 85,333 immigrants in the District in 2019, 51.3% or 43,781 were “noncitizens.”<sup>5</sup> Local elections should be made available to permanent residents, who comprise an important part of the District's population.

### **The Right to Vote Is Significant for Legal Aid's Disenfranchised Immigrant Clients**

As a legal aid organization, we have seen firsthand how District immigrants are excluded from the protections of the law and do not receive full accommodations from local government agencies. Access to the right to vote in local elections would give immigrants increased power to ensure they are not further marginalized by the District and its agencies due to their status as immigrants or green card holders.

Thousands of residents whose immigration status leaves them marginalized in the District depend on elected officials and the individuals they appoint to government agencies.<sup>6</sup> For example, the Department of Healthcare Finance administers the Healthcare Alliance program, which is a locally funded and crucial gap-filling source of health coverage for immigrants living in the District. The Healthcare Alliance program became more difficult to access in 2011 due to

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<sup>2</sup> See Ron Hayduk, *Democracy for All, Restoring Immigration Voting Rights in the United States* 15 (2008), [https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/hayduk\\_-\\_chapter\\_2.pdf](https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/hayduk_-_chapter_2.pdf) (Explaining that “noncitizens” were permitted to vote in the states until 1928); *see also* Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Pub.L. 104–208, 10 Stat. 3009–546 (This federal law prohibits noncitizens from voting in federal elections, punishing them by fines, imprisonment, inadmissibility and deportation.).

<sup>3</sup> Peter A. Tatian & Sara McTarnaghan et al., *Urban Institute, State of Immigrants in the District of Columbia, Data Profiles of Immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean*, (2018), [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Migration Policy Institute, *District of Columbia, Demographics & Social*, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/DC-top>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> See e.g., Valerie Lacarte, *Immigration Policy Institute, Black Immigrants in the United States Face Hurdles, but Outcomes Vary by City*, (“In the Washington, DC area, Black immigrants have a slightly higher poverty rate than native-born Black residents.”).

the enactment of unnecessarily strict eligibility standards.<sup>7</sup> Until the pandemic, the requirements made it difficult for District residents, namely immigrants, to seek and maintain coverage and healthcare access under the program.<sup>8</sup> The statutory issue was resolved by the Council this past budget cycle but created nearly a decade of challenges for immigrants who needed and qualified for the healthcare provided by the Alliance program.<sup>9</sup> If permanent residents were allowed to vote for elected officials, who determine statutory eligibility standards and the funding that goes to such programs, it is more likely that programs would be more accessible to the people they are meant to serve.

Voting rights also matter when it comes to language access. While all District residents need to access resources and services from the city, the District does not always accommodate the spoken and written languages of the residents who seek those services and resources. Despite the Language Access Act of 2004, Legal Aid finds that important government agency information regarding resources and services are often not translated into the different languages in which District residents commonly communicate.<sup>10</sup> D.C. permanent residents would potentially have a greater influence on language accessibility needs if they were allowed to vote in local elections.

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<sup>7</sup> See Damon King, Making Justice Real, The District Must Finally and Completely Eliminate Barriers to the Healthcare Alliance Program, July 13, 2021, <https://www.makingjusticereal.org/the-district-must-finally-and-completely-eliminate-barriers-to-the-healthcare-alliance-program>.

<sup>8</sup> See John Wooley, Street Sense Media, Accessing health insurance in DC became easier during COVID-19. Will it last?, July 20, 2021, [https://www.streetsensemedia.org/article/insurance-healthcare-alliance-2022-budget/ - .YrxkZ3bMI2w](https://www.streetsensemedia.org/article/insurance-healthcare-alliance-2022-budget/- .YrxkZ3bMI2w).

<sup>9</sup> See D.C. Code § 7–1407.

<sup>10</sup> See Letter to Chairman Phil Mendelson, Council of the District of Columbia, Regarding the Language Access for Education Amendment Act of 2017 Eric Angel, Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, April 10, 2017, <https://www.legalaiddc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Letter-re-LAAA-to-Mendelson-2017-04-10.pdf>; Nicole Dooley and Blair Gilbert, Language Access During COVID-19 at DOES and DHS, May 14, 2020, <https://www.makingjusticereal.org/language-access-during-covid-19-at-does-and-dhs>; see also The Language Act is supposed “to provide greater access and participation in public services, programs and activities for residents of the District of Columbia with limited or no-English proficiency (LEP/NEP).” District of Columbia Office of Human Rights, What is the D.C. Language Access Act?, <https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/DCLAAFactSheetEnglish.pdf>.

Finally, Legal Aid has recently testified that domestic workers, many of whom are immigrants, have been excluded from the District’s human rights protections and workplace safety statutes.<sup>11</sup> While domestic workers need and deserve inclusion in these laws, legislative changes are difficult to implement without a voice in the electoral process. By allowing permanent residents to vote and elect public officials, statutory barriers and exclusions that directly affect our immigrant clients would likely be reduced.

### **The District Should Follow the Lead of Other Jurisdictions and Grant Voting Rights to Immigrants**

At least fourteen municipalities across the country allow permanent residents to vote in local elections. Eleven are located in Maryland (Barnesville, Cheverly, Chevy Chase Section 3, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, Hyattsville, Martin’s Additions, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, Somerset, Takoma Park) where the municipalities’ charters either explicitly allow “noncitizens” to vote or simply do not prohibit “noncitizen” voting. There are also two locations in Vermont.<sup>12</sup> And in 2016, San Francisco, California, voters passed Proposition N, which allowed certain noncitizens to vote in school board elections, making San Francisco the first in the United States to enable immigrant parent voting.<sup>13</sup> In 2021, San Francisco supervisors voted unanimously to permanently allow noncitizens to vote in Board of Education elections, updating the voter-approved ballot measure from five years ago due to positive support.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Testimony before the Committee on Labor and Workforce Development with comments from the Committee on Government Operations and Facilities, Council of the District of Columbia, Public Hearing on Bill 24-0712 “Domestic Worker Employment Rights Amendment Act of 2022” Jen Jenkins, Policy Advocate, Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia, June 16, 2022, <https://www.legalaiddc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Testimony-before-the-Committee-on-Labor-and-Workforce-Development-regarding-Bill-24-0712.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> See Matt Vasilogambros, Pew Trusts, Noncitizens Are Slowly Gaining Voting Rights, July 1, 2021, <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/07/01/noncitizens-are-slowly-gaining-voting-rights>; see also Caitlynn Peetz, Chevy Chase Town Council Approves Plan Allowing Non-Citizens To Vote in Local Elections, December 11, 2018, <https://bethesdamagazine.com/bethesda-beat/government/chevy-chase-town-council-votes-unanimously-to-allow-non-us-citizens-to-vote-in-local-elections/> (“The wealthy town of about 3,000 straddling northwest Washington, D.C., is the 11th municipality in Maryland and eighth in Montgomery County to adopt non-citizen voting rights.”).

<sup>13</sup> City and County of San Francisco, Department of Elections, Non-Citizen Registration and Voting, <https://sfelections.sfgov.org/non-citizen-registration-and-voting>.

<sup>14</sup> See ABC News, Non-citizen Voting Rights Gain Traction as Immigrants Vote in SF Unified School Board Recall, February 11, 2021, <https://abc7news.com/noncitizen-voting-san-francisco-recall-election-rights-jose/11556464/>.

Including permanent residents in local elections has had positive outcomes for jurisdictions that expand voter rights to permanent residents. Research shows that immigrants vote in significant numbers in some districts, on par with citizen neighbors in some cases, contributing to electoral and policy outcomes.<sup>15</sup> While there might be a delay in District permanent residents registering and using their right to vote, it is undeniable the benefit of granting such a right will have for democracy in the District.<sup>16</sup> When immigrants have the right to vote, they create a richer political process.

### **Conclusion**

This committee should take a step toward allowing permanent residents to vote by passing the “Local Resident Voting Rights Act.” Local elections should be open to the immigrant community because they are vital and valuable to the political landscape of the District.

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<sup>15</sup> See Immigrant Voting Rights, <https://www.immigrantvotingrights.com/research-and-information>.

<sup>16</sup> See Kimberly Yam, San Francisco Now Allows Noncitizens To Vote In School Board Elections, HuffPost, July 18, 2018, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/san-francisco-now-allows-non-citizens-to-vote-in-school-board-elections\\_n\\_5b4e301ee4b0de86f48775d0](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/san-francisco-now-allows-non-citizens-to-vote-in-school-board-elections_n_5b4e301ee4b0de86f48775d0).

**Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety**  
**July 7, 2022**  
**Dr. Dante J. O'Hara**  
**DC Ward 1**  
**Lead Organizer, Claudia Jones School for Political Education**

Dear Chairperson Allen and members of the Committee,

It is my pleasure to testify today in strong support of B24-0300, the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021.

My name is Dante O'Hara, I live in Ward 1 of DC and I am the lead organizer for the Claudia Jones School for Political Education, a grassroots popular education organization that supports the struggles of the Washington, DC working class and immigrant community. I am also representing the DC Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, which is a coalition of local organizations fighting against political repression including the current reactionary attack on voting rights throughout the entire country.

I testify today because there is a present crisis in our democracy with 19 states (not including the District of Columbia) passing laws restricting voting rights. Republican lawmakers are constructing barriers, making it difficult and sometimes impossible for Black, brown and poor people to vote, who are already citizens of this country. On the national level, it is crucial that we keep our eyes on the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act because these federal laws impact us deeply here in the District.

Now, since DC has relatively good voter protections to begin with, it makes it easier for social movements to fight for stronger voter protections, electoral reform and the expansion of voting rights. Several jurisdictions in Maryland suburbs—including Mount Rainier, Hyattsville, and Takoma Park—already allow people who aren't U.S. citizens to vote in municipal elections. In 2021, New York City Council passed the "Our City, Our Vote" Municipal Voting Rights Bill which, if enacted would expand the voting rights of 800,000 non-citizen legal permanent residents and those with work authorizations. This bill was recently struck down in the New York Supreme Court, so DC needs to do better to ensure this does not happen to our residents here. The striking down of this bill, is part of the national onslaught of democratic rights of all people in this country. This also exposes the importance of the fight for DC Statehood, so our residents are not held hostage by who is in control of the U.S. Congress.

Legal permanent residents, immigrants, non-citizens, DACA and TPS holders are our neighbors, our friends, and our family in the District. If this bill is enacted it will expand and enfranchise the voting rights of thousands in this city to participate in local elections, which will forever strengthen our local democracy by giving people the right to vote. Granting the right to vote for residents gives them the opportunity to have a voice in local decisions that affect them and their families in their day-to-day lives.

Claudia Jones was a Black woman immigrant. She moved to the United States when she was a child when her home country, Trinidad, was still a colony of the British empire. While never having the opportunity to be granted citizenship and the right to vote, she fought tirelessly for the equality of Black people, the equality of women, the rights of immigrants, and for peace in the world. She was deported for having these views. Immigrants: Asian, Latino, Black, Middle-Eastern, etc, face the same kind of repression from the threats of immigration enforcement agencies like ICE and DHS.

Finally, our organization asks that the committee consider introducing an amendment to the current bill by adding Temporary Protected Status (TPS), Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) holders to be included as qualified electors in local District elections.

Thank you so much Councilmembers Nadeau, White, Pinto, Lewis George, Henderson and Silverman for your leadership on this issue. I also want to thank the Mayor, who previously introduced this bill in 2014 when she was the Ward 4 councilmember. I very much hope to see this bill swiftly move out of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety and to a vote in front of the full council before the end of the year.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



@ClaudiaJonesEdu (@claudiajoneesschool) <https://claudiajoneesschool.org>

[CJ School Face Book](#) [CJ School youtube chanel](#)

## **Testimony of Carol Rosenblatt on 7/7/2022 before the DC Council Judiciary and Public Safety Committee on B24-0300 - Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021**

Good morning Chairperson Allen and members of the committee. My name is Carol Rosenblatt and I live in the Forest Hills neighborhood of Ward 3. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of this bill and thank Council Person Nadeau for being the main sponsor along with the other sponsors on the most recent reiteration. I am representing the Claudia Jones School for Political Education that is a popular education organization aimed at building the political consciousness of the Washington, DC working class community through educational programs, discussion and activism.

I am proud to live in Washington, DC – a city of immigrants, being the granddaughter of immigrants myself and proud of it. They came to this country impoverished, unable to speak English and looking for a new way of life like many immigrants in DC today.

Immigrants kept U.S. society going during the COVID-19 pandemic, doing essential work largely at minimum wage, but many are barred from weighing in on the future of that society at the ballot box.

Early in the United States' history, voting was a function not of national citizenship but of gender, race and class. The acquisition of political rights, including voting rights, has been a vital tool for disempowered groups to achieve economic, social, and civil rights. Noncitizen voting would enhance the visibility and voices of immigrants, making government more representative, responsive, and accountable. Far from diluting the concept of citizenship, noncitizen voting would enrich it by fully incorporating immigrants.

These are our neighbors who pay taxes, send their children to public schools, work, start businesses and contribute to their communities. They should be able to elect leaders and have a say in local politics just like anyone else.

Statehood for DC has always been important to me with “taxation without representation” being a central theme. We cannot fight for DC Statehood and continue to disenfranchise our very own DC residents.

While the current legislation does not include other categories of non- citizens I would urge you to consider adding DACA and TPS.

Thank you for permitting me to testify and I urge your support of the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act.

# **TESTIMONY REGARDING VOTING RIGHTS**

**Commissioner Trupti J. Patel, ANC 2A03**

**July 7, 2022**

Good Morning Chairperson Allen. My name is Trupti Patel and I'm the legacy of 2 suitcases and \$8. I'm testifying because I support the Local Residents Voting Rights Bills and believe that every resident has a right to choose their elected officials.

I weigh the great responsibility of trying to be eloquent, articulate and succinct on an issue that is intensely emotional and deeply personal for myself and others. I'm the daughter of Immigrants and am a naturalized citizen.

I'm asking for the Council to support this legislation so that green card-holding permanent residents (as well as non-citizens) are able to have a right to vote in our elections.

The District of Columbia has a strong immigrant community. One in seven D.C. residents is an immigrant, while about one in nine residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent.

In 2018, D.C. was home to 50,612 women, 40,673 men, and 6,561 children who were immigrants. The top countries of origin for immigrants were El Salvador (11 percent of immigrants), Ethiopia (7 percent), Mexico (3 percent), Trinidad & Tobago (3 percent), and China (3 percent).

Immigrant-led households in D.C. paid \$931.8 million in federal taxes and \$416.9 million in state and local taxes in 2018. D.C. residents in immigrant-led households had \$3 billion in spending power (after-tax income) and 5,452 immigrant business owners accounted for 16 percent of all self-employed D.C. residents in 2018, generating \$145 million in business income. Immigrants accounted for 31 percent of business owners in the greater Washington metropolitan area (which spans D.C., Maryland, and Virginia).

While it's unclear exactly how many D.C. residents are green card holders, based on the Migration Policy Institute, out of 85,333 immigrants in the District in 2019, 51.3% or 43,781 were "noncitizens". To add on, 10% of the city's population is foreign-born, and as of 2018, immigrants accounted for 17% of the D.C. labor force.

Many of those immigrants, and many green card holders across the country, have been lawful residents for a significant time. As of 2018, almost 20% of the immigrants living in D.C. were eligible for naturalization.

Green card holders -- or permanent residents -- can work freely in the U.S. and receive many of the same benefits and assistance as citizens, but they are not authorized to vote in federal elections and most local elections until they are naturalized.

There has been support for this demand for the last 9 years.

- A version of this bill was first introduced in December 2013 by Muriel Bowser, the current mayor when she was the Ward 4 councilmember.
- The bill was introduced again in January 2015, this time by CM David Grosso and the Committee on Judiciary held a hearing on the bill on July 15, 2015.
- It was introduced a third time in January 2017 by Grosso with 6 other councilmembers in support including current CMs Silverman, Allen, Nadeau, R. White, and Bonds.
- Those councilmembers remained in support when the bill was reintroduced a fourth time in October 2019.
- In June 2021, CM Nadeau became the new lead sponsor and introduced the bill for the fifth time again with CMs R. White, Allen, Pinto, Lewis George, Henderson, and Silverman.

Neighboring municipalities in the state of Maryland already allow non-citizens to vote in their elections.

This bill will finally give voting power to communities that have been disenfranchised for decades. Immigrants, especially Black and brown, tend to be the same people that face the brunt of our housing crisis, wage gap, and every other inequality in the District.

By giving each resident of DC a vote, politicians can no longer ignore struggles that a sizable amount of our neighbors face every day, from street vending from the minimum wage.

Many green card holders have chosen to make the District their permanent home and contribute to the economy and pay for the same local services that citizens do. This entitles them to have a say in choosing the leaders who oversee their public schools, transportation, zoning, policing, and more.

This bill will also continue growing momentum for our fight for DC Statehood. We as DC residents have never gotten equal representation in Congress. We cannot fight for DC Statehood but at the same time, continue to disenfranchise our very own.

The time has come to pass this legislation.

In Service & Solidarity

July 8, 2022

Council of the District of Columbia  
Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 2004

Chairperson Allen and members of the committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the *Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021*. My name is Ahmad Abu-Khalaf, and I am testifying today in my personal capacity as a DC resident in favor of this legislation, which would give permanent residents the right to vote in local elections. Today, I would like to share my own experience as a U.S. citizen and a former green-card holder. Between July 2016 and September 2020, I lived and worked in DC as a U.S. permanent resident. While I paid federal and state taxes and was impacted by the DC Council decisions and enacted policies, I was unable to vote and participate in local DC elections due to my citizenship status.

Not only I was not able to vote in local DC elections, but also felt neglected as I did not receive any candidate or campaign outreach during the 2018 election season. These circumstances discouraged me from paying attention to local politics and what is happening at the Wilson building, as my voice did not matter. This experience changed starting September 30, 2020, when I officially became a U.S. citizen. Ever since I became a U.S. citizen who is able to vote in federal and local DC elections, I've been engaged in local elections both as a volunteer who canvases with different DC campaigns and as an informed voters who pays close attention to decisions made by local officials about policies that matter to me and communities city-wide, including affordable housing, public transportation, climate, education, human services and other policies.

I have heard concerns from DC policymakers and candidates about how passing this bill could discourage some green-card holders from pursuing U.S. citizenship. I would like to argue that this perspective neglects the fact that a range of factors often stand between permanent residents and receiving U.S. citizenship within a reasonable timeline. For example, among green-card holders who have applied for U.S. citizenship, a significant backlog of cases at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has slowed the naturalization process. Additionally, other factors, including a \$725 application fee and language barriers, deter some green-card holders from applying for citizenship.

Furthermore, allowing green-card holders who pay their fair share of taxes to vote in local elections would grant DC residents who have chosen to make the District their permanent home a voice in the local decisions that directly affect their and their families' day-to-day lives. These permanent residents should have a say in choosing the leaders who oversee their public schools, transportation, housing, community safety, and more. We have seen jurisdictions across the U.S. revise their election laws to allow permanent residents to vote in local elections, including New York City, Takoma Park, and San Francisco, and today I urge the Committee and DC Council to follow suit. Such actions give a voice to communities whose concerns have often been overlooked and encourage policymakers and candidates to be responsive to all communities, including immigrant communities.

I urge the committee and the whole D.C. council to approve the *Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021* to give local voting power to permanent residents in a city that prides itself on our immigrant community.

Sincerely,  
Ahmad Abu-Khalaf

Testimony of Kesh Ladduwahetty  
Before the Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety  
B24-0300, "Local Residents Voting Rights Act of 2021"  
July 7, 2022

Chair Allen and Councilmembers, I am very pleased to be here today at this hearing on the Local Residents Voting Rights Act. Councilmember Nadeau, thank you so much for introducing this bill, and thanks to all the Councilmembers who co-introduced it.

My name is Kesh Ladduwahetty and I am here as a DC resident of more than 30 years, an immigrant from Sri Lanka, a voter, a member of DC for Democracy and an activist who believes deeply in the power of democracy to make a more perfect union. I am honored to add my voice to all the others who are here today in strong support of this bill.

This legislation is personal for me. From the age of 11 until 1996, I was a green card holder, and it was yet another reminder that I was an outsider, not a full member of this community.

Voting is a gateway that opens a path to deeper forms of civic participation. When I became a US citizen, I registered to vote right away, thanks to the LWV volunteers who came to the naturalization ceremony with voter registration forms. It was very satisfying to vote in the Presidential election that year. A few years later, I got involved with the campaign led by the local Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth and others to create the Klingle Valley Trail. It was my first experience testifying at a public hearing and writing a letter to the editor of a local paper, The Northwest Current. It was a natural progression from exercising my power to vote to exercising my civic muscles in these broader ways. We would benefit so much as a community from having more DC residents exercise their civic muscles.

We are living in a time when democracy is being suffocated in United States, both through institutional failures in the US Senate and Supreme Court, and right-wing efforts to roll back voting rights in several states. It is more important than ever for the future Douglass Commonwealth to counter these trends by modeling the future of American democracy right here. One very modest and reasonable step is to extend voting rights to permanent residents, who are just one step away from full citizenship. Please pass this law soon, so that Congressional review can be completed while the current Congress is in session. After enacting this law, I hope we can expand democracy even further, by extending voting rights to all adult residents regardless of citizenship status, and to reduce the voting age to 16.

Thank you.

Kesh Ladduwahetty  
2939 Van Ness Street, NW Apt 220  
Washington, DC 20008

**Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY**

**B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”  
July 7, 2022**

**Testimony provided by: Abel Nunez, Executive Director of the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)**

Thank you for the opportunity to allow me to testify before you today. My name is Abel Nunez, and I am the Executive Director of the Central American Resource Center - CARECEN. My family immigrated to DC from El Salvador in the late 70's. It wasn't until the 90s that I became a Naturalized citizen. I decided to become a citizen not only because the U.S. was my home, but also because I wanted to exercise my right to vote. I believe that it is a fundamental right that ensures a strong democracy.

Once again, we are here today discussing Bill 24-300 that aims to expand the right to vote for legal permanent residents (LPRs) in DC local elections, which would give them voice on the elected officials that represent them. According to the American Immigration Council 2018 report, 11% of the Districts population is foreign born, 44,289 immigrants or 45 percent had naturalized as of 2018, and 21,952 immigrants were eligible to become [naturalized U.S. citizens](#) in 2017, which would be the approximate number of people that would gain the ability to vote under this bill. While this bill wants to achieve great outcomes by enfranchising LPRs, I believe it will have unintended consequences for the very people it is trying to afford the right to vote.

I say this not only because of my personal experience but also because I am the Executive Director of CARECEN, an organization that for 41 years has focused on the comprehensive development of the Latino population by providing direct services, while promoting grassroots empowerment, civic engagement, and human rights advocacy. Our organization works to help integrate immigrants to increase their success in their new community. CARECEN's Legal Program has a Citizenship component that assists LPRs in preparing their application for citizenship and also ensures that our clients are successful at their citizenship interview and exam. In 2016 the program experienced an increase of 100% of LPR interested in the citizenship process. This was in large part due to LPRs desire to participate in the election process during the anti-immigrant presidential candidacy of Donald Trump.

The City Council should aim to safeguard LPRs against possible issues that may jeopardize their ability to naturalize. Bill 24-300 delineates that LPRs are only eligible to vote for the local elected offices and would meet the new USCIS updated guidance which states “If the applicant registered to vote but did not affirmatively claim to be a U.S. citizen, USCIS will not consider that person to have committed the unlawful act of falsely claiming U.S. citizenship. However, if the applicant registered to vote, he or she will have the burden to prove either that the registration form did not specifically ask about citizenship status or that the applicant did not profess to being a U.S. citizen. Since it is up to the applicant to prove they did not claim U.S. Citizenship by registering and voting, every application would be treated as special cases needing more review delaying the process and adding cost. This is important since any unlawful claim of U.S. Citizenship can not only deny an LPR the ability to attain citizenship but can put them in Deportation proceedings.

The DC local and federal elections are held on the same day and use one ballot. The probability of an LPR to make a mistake and incorrectly vote in a federal election is high. The consequences for making

that mistake do not surpass the benefit, given that LPRs eventually would be eligible to apply for citizenship and gain the full right to vote. It is also unclear whether LPRs actually vote in jurisdictions where they are allowed to vote in local elections, as messaging around which elections they can participate in can be confusing and cause uncertainty. The risk of being barred from becoming a U.S. citizen because of an error is too high for some to feel comfortable taking this step. Well-intentioned community members may encourage noncitizens who are not LPRs (TPS holders or undocumented immigrants, for example) to register to vote erroneously, thus harming their future chances of becoming U.S. citizens and possibly putting them at risk of being placed in deportation proceedings.

CARECEN is here today to ask the committee to proceed with caution and address the above concerns as **B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”** is considered. Any bill that expands voting rights must have a separate entry point and ballot to avoid LPRs voting for other elected positions that could jeopardize their status. The Committee should also consider the burden it will add to the LPRs when they decide to apply for citizenship, since their application will need a deeper review and legal counsel to respond to any questions by USCIS. So, at this time, we ask the committee not to move forward with the bill.

Thank you

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**Bill 24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”**

**Before the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Chairperson Charles Allen**

**Thursday, July 7, 2022, 9:30 AM  
Virtual Hearing via Zoom  
Testimony of Eric Goulet**

Good morning, Chairperson Allen, Councilmembers \_\_\_\_\_, and Council staff. My name is Eric Goulet, Ward 3 resident of Washington, DC, and I am excited to join you at today’s virtual public hearing to testify in enthusiastic support of Bill 24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”.

On June 15, 2022, Kush Kharod challenged Ward 3 DC Council candidates to follow our words with action and to sign up to testify in support of this important legislation on July 7th, and I’m excited to be joined by fellow former Ward 3 candidates Commissioner Beau Finely and Deidre Brown who are also testifying at today’s hearing.

The importance of this legislation became evident to me as I was gathering the petition signatures needed to qualify for the ballot. Many non-citizen, permanent residents I spoke with lamented that they would love to be able sign and vote in the Democratic Primary, but were unable to do so, because they were not United States citizens. These included several residents that I personally

knew from the Palisades community who were actively involved in their local public schools' Parent Teacher Associations.

We are fighting for No Taxation without Representation in our quest for DC statehood, so we need to be consistent and make this a reality in here in DC. Residents of the District of Columbia who file income taxes should be able to have an equal say in determining how our tax dollars are utilized by being able to elect leaders through our democratic process. This legislation would allow green card holders to vote in all local DC elections for important leadership positions, such Mayor, Councilmembers, Attorney General, State Board of Education representatives, and Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, as well as for recalls, initiatives, or referendums. I support expanding the definition of "permanent resident" to also include DC residents who are immigrants through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

As we implement this Act, we need to be certain that the staff at the Board of Elections is appropriately trained and forms are clearly updated to ensure that a permanent resident registering to vote under this Act correctly designates their non-citizen status, so that they do not inadvertently receive a ballot with federal offices. The actual process of producing a ballot should be the easy part, because ballots are already automated and printed by Ward and ANC, so there should be no issue with limiting a printed or electronic ballot to local elections, so long as the designation of citizenship is correctly on file. I thank the Council for their leadership for introducing this important legislation and encourage the Committee to move swiftly for mark-up in late September or early October, so that this legislation can receive the required two readings this Council Period and be enacted into law and implemented for the 2024 DC election cycle.

## Hearing on B24-0300 - Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021

Thursday, July 7, 2022

9:30 am

via Zoom

Statement of Rehana Mohammed

Vice Chair, Board of Directors

The DC Center for the LGBT Community

(also known as Metro DC Community Center Inc.)

Former ANC Commissioner, SMD 2F07

Chairperson Allen and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Rehana Mohammed and I'm the Vice Chair of the Board of Directors at The DC Center for the LGBT Community (The DC Center) and a Ward 2 resident. I am here to voice my support for the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021.

This important piece of legislation would fundamentally help the District be more inclusive, more equitable, and more free by giving voting rights to thousands of people that have been disenfranchised and neglected -- communities that do not receive outreach during the election season and whose voice is not fully represented by our elected leaders.

The speakers on the prior two panels have already laid out many reasons why this legislation is critical. I will not repeat the many reasons why this legislation is overdue. I will instead focus on my personal experience as a volunteer with The DC Center and as the daughter of an Ethiopian immigrant.

The DC Center helps support the LGBTQ+ community in the district through direct services, support groups, and community events. One of the services we offer is Center Global - programming specifically to support LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and asylees. These folks have fled unsafe conditions and persecution to come and build a new life. Many of the asylum seekers and asylees in our community are politically engaged and want to vote - they deserve that right, so I'm also asking that this legislation be expanded to include additional non-citizen statuses. Adding statuses such as DACA, TPS, Asylees, and others will not be that difficult. There are 15

areas that allow non-citizens to vote and they simply say, if you are a resident of the city, and you're more than 18 years old, you are allowed to vote.

On a personal level, my father and many members of my family emigrated from Ethiopia to the US, so this hits close to home for me. The Ethiopian community is a huge part of what makes DC unique and a great place to live. I'm proud to be Habesha and my community deserves full voting rights.

When I was an ANC Commissioner, many of my constituents were Salvadoran immigrants. After I was elected, I met with some of my constituents in a Latino cooperative in my district. They were very clear - they told me 'even though many of us couldn't vote for you, you still work for us.' I agree, but many of our local elected officials do not get the benefit of these interactions. These communities make DC the vibrant, supportive, rich community it is and they deserve to have a say in how its run.

Again, I urge you to expand and pass this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

July 07, 2022

## **Testimony for the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021**

Dear Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tam Vo, and I have been a resident of DC since 2019. I am testifying because I support the Local Residents Voting Rights Bill, and I am asking the Council to grant green card holders and permanent residents the right to vote in DC elections. I relocated to the United States from Vietnam in 2010 to pursue higher education opportunities, sharing similar goals as many immigrants who came before and after. After completing my Ph.D. in Chemistry at Georgia State University, I began a post-doctoral fellowship at the National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health. I have been living in DC ever since. I fell in love with the city for its diverse, prosperous immigrant populations, those who come from many different places in the world and share their wisdom, culture, and food to make up a thriving city. I also love the city for its unique struggle of gaining independence from Congress, for the same battle that I have been aware of for years of living in this country, "taxation without representation."

This city is not only thriving in the multicultural environment but also the imperative contributions from the immigrant community to the local economy. 5,452 immigrant business owners accounted for 16 percent of all self-employed D.C. residents in 2018 and generated \$145 million in business income. One in six D.C. workers is an immigrant. Immigrants are a vital force supporting DC's economy in various ways – from life, physical, and health science to hospitality and social services. We are workers, taxpayers, neighbors, and friends.

For DC Statehood, we cannot ignore the voice of the immigrant communities that have been disenfranchised for decades. Therefore, I urge the Council to pass the Local Residents Voting Rights bill before the end of the year. Our strength lies within the people, and it is not at its full potential where a part of the community cannot fully participate in our government.

Sincerely,  
Tam Vo, Ph.D. (he/him)

## AMENDED VERSION 7/7

The Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety Public Hearing  
Thursday, July 07, 2022 09:30 am Virtual Meeting Platform  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, DC, 20004  
Public Hearing on the following Legislation:  
B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”

I am Joanne Fleming, Ward 4 resident, representing the DC Statehood Green Party, which has long supported these voting rights for non-citizens. As an immigrant I strongly endorse legislation to give non-citizens who are DC residents local voting rights in DC elections. These residents deserve the same rights as citizens, although federal law excludes them from voting in national elections for President and in DC for Delegate to the House with no vote herself since we are still denied self-determination and full citizenship by DC not being a state. Non-citizens living in DC contribute to our community in many ways, pay taxes and richly deserve voting rights, another real fulfillment of DC’s status as the nation’s first officially recognized Human Rights City. Kudos to Councilmember Nadeau, all the co-sponsors of B24-030 and to the activists who are campaigning for its passage.

As the press release of June 9, 2021 announcing the reintroduction of this bill from Councilmember Nadeau said.

“Every day, elected officials are making decisions about affordable housing, education, human services and more,...People who have made their permanent homes here should have a hand in who represents them in government. The District of Columbia has long been a place that has welcomed immigrants into our community, and it’s time to allow for their full participation in our institutions.”

Council Member Nadeau also notes that local government became even more consequential during the pandemic, as decisions were being made that greatly impacted the health and safety of permanent residents in the District of Columbia...As more and more legislators across the country introduce bills to suppress votes of their most marginalized residents, here in the District of Columbia we are marching in the opposite direction. We are on the verge of Statehood and full representation for DC residents. It’s time for us to expand and strengthen every aspect of our democracy,”

Let’s get this done before the November elections, so DC residents can proudly stand in solidarity, telling the Congress elected in these mid-term elections, “don’t dare to trample on our right of self-determination”!

## **Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety**

Public Hearing on B24-0300, the Local Residents Voting Rights Act

Testimony of Alex Dodds, Thursday, July 7, 2022

Hello, members of the Committee thank you so much for hearing testimony today on this important legislation.

My name is Alex Dodds, I'm a resident of Ward 4 and I'm the chair of DC for Democracy. I'm glad to join several of my fellow DC4D members in testifying here today in support of the Local Residents Voting Rights Act.

Everyone here today is a neighbor in our communities. But right now, only some of us have a say in who gets elected to decide housing policy, approaches to safety, and public investments.

Everyone here today participates in DC's local economy. But right now, only some of us get to decide things like the tipped minimum wage, drug policy, and other issues put to voters through ballot measures.

Many people here today have raised, are raising, or have family members with school-aged kids, but only some of us get to decide who belongs on the State Board of Education, or gets to appoint a schools chancellor.

I support the Local Residents Voting Rights Act because ALL OF US should get to decide these things. All of us should decide these things \*particularly\* because non-citizens currently make up a huge part of DC communities: in 2019 there were 693,000 people living in DC and approximately 44,000 were non-citizens — 16% of the population. All of us should get to decide these things because U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has a backlog of up to 1 million cases, steep fees, and language barriers. All of us should get to decide these things because non-citizens are often the people most harshly impacted by DC's housing crisis, wage gap, and every other inequality in the District, yet immigrant-led households in DC paid \$416.9 million in state and local taxes in 2018.

I support this bill's expanding voting rights to green card holders and permanent residents. I also encourage you to go further and include people here under

DACA and TPS as well as asylees. Fifteen other jurisdictions currently allow non-citizens to vote and they simply say, if you are a resident of the city, and you're more than 18 years old, you are allowed to vote.

This bill is a way to give people a greater say in our government and how we make our communities better for everyone who lives here. I appreciate your consideration of this issue and the opportunity to testify before you today.

DC Judiciary Committee Hearing

Bill B024-300 Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021

July 7, 2022

Statement

By

Arturo Griffiths

Good afternoon. My name is Arturo Griffiths. I am the Coordinator of the DC IMMIGRANT VOTING RIGHTS COALITION. I was born in Panama and am now a US citizen. I came from a family that came to this country and this city to try to improve their lives and contribute to this country. I have lived in Washington DC for over 50 years. I am testifying today in support of the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021. I am also recommending that you allow all immigrants with work permits to vote in DC local elections. That would include permanent legal residents, TPS (Temporary Protected Status) residents, and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) residents.

I have been in active in the immigrant for many years. I have always worked to improve their lives and work to integrate immigrants into the city's life and mainstream economy. If DC didn't have all the immigrants here in our city, we would not have the city that we have today. Our buildings, our services, our businesses, and our schools are kept alive and functioning because of our immigrant brothers and sisters.

I am passionate about voting rights for everybody in DC. I think this city should be a city where everybody votes. Today our immigrants are asking for an opportunity to vote.

Today I am submitting a petition that we collected with 54 signatures of residents who support the Local Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021. They are asked you to amend this bill to include all immigrant with work permits. That would include permanent legal residents, TPS residents, and DACA residents.

Thank you for your attention. Viva DC!

# PETITION

## DC IMMIGRANT VOTING RIGHTS COALITION

June-July 2022

We, the undersigned, support the  
Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 (B24-0300)

Nosotros, los firmantes, apoyamos la  
Enmienda de Ley 2021 para el derecho al voto para residentes locales (B24-0300)

This bill would give permanent resident DC noncitizens the right to vote in local elections. We demand that the DC City Council add the following categories of immigrants to this bill: DC residents holding TPS (Temporary Protected Status) and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

Este proyecto de ley le dara la oportunidad para que todos los inmigrantes de DC que tengan residencia permanente puedan votar en las elecciones locales. Exigimos que el Conesjo de la Ciudad agregue en la legislacion a los inmigrantes con el status de TPS (Temporary Protected Status) y DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals)

Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Michael Skora	3719 Reservoir Ave.	716-768-0826	mtskora@gmail.com
Kevin Huang	24180 16th St NW Apt 245	704 941 9126	kwh0303@gmail.com
Elsy	1519 Park Rd. NW Apt. 302	(202) 469-9384	floriselesy001@gmail.com
Maria Espinoza		239-281-9736	mariaespi21@gmail.com
Jada Yeboah	2620 13th St NW Washington DC	904 777 0376	jayeboah@swu.edu
Abel Amene	506 Longfellow St NW #103	202-480-4939	amene@gmail.com
Jacqueline Castaneda	1493 Newton St NW.	(202) 436-5078	castan21@gmail.com
Rebecca Vagstad	2530 Clearwater Dr.	202-741-9175	rebeccavagstad@gmail.com
Abido Cinto		202 468 0755	

PETITION

DC IMMIGRANT VOTING RIGHTS COALITION

June-July 2022

We, the undersigned, support the  
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Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Evelyn Dionisio		202 749 04 75	
Nancy Vasquez		(240) 672-4107	nancy.roxvas69@gmail.com
Joanne Fleming		240 602 8935	JFWFleming@gmail.com
Juan. Ayala Provira		(202) 468-5697	juan.aar03@gmail.com
Ion Standfield		202 302 2211	StandfieldSam101@gmail.com
Monica Wilson		202 216-496-5151	monica.wilson90@gmail.com

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Name

Address

Phone Number

Email

JAVIER GARCIA 1700 LAMONT ST NW 202-286-7535 <sup>electorativo @ yahoo . com</sup>

JOSUE CHAVEZ 3800 ST NW 202-8404539

JUAN A. FERRER 1660 LAMONT ST NW

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Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Zoila Marina Perdomo	1369 Irving St NW, DC 20010	202/717-1715	
Raul Matos	1369 Irving St NW, DC 20010	202/845-9641	
Salvador Figueroa	1338 R. ST. NW, Wash DC 20009	202/845-9139	
Ana Bizarro	6713 14TH ST. N.W. Wash, DC 20012	202/591-8021	
Zoila Dávila	1656 Park Rd NW, Wash. 20010	202/265-3293	
Carlos Aparicio	1440 Rock Creek Ford Rd NW WDC 20011	202/876-6788	
Luis Antonio Villa	1300 Spring Rd NW WDC 20010	202/361-9236	
Ernesto Zavala	1656 Park Rd NW, WDC	202/640-9120	
Rosa Fabian	4305 Halley St SE	336-59762-4333	

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Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Victor Echeguya	1610 Park Rd NW, WDC 20010	202/509-1048	
Lourio Mayo Zelaya	3115 Mt. Pleasant St NW WDC - 20010	301/768-7216	
Juan Guerra	3149 Mt. Pleasant St NW-WDC 20010	202/321-8435	
Melissa Strova Valencia	17 Q St NE, DC 1390 Tewkesbury Pl.	2026772018	stroval@outlook.es
Patricia Carbajal	NW H202	(240)643-7628	vocaput77@gmail
Cecilio Coa	3615 14th St NW	202/570-1730	ceco1008@gmail
LA MERROW	3540 Rock Creek Ch Rd NW	202-631-6246	ehmerrow@gmail.com
Francisco Pacheco	4724 Leroy Graham Dr. Capital Heights MD	503-747-0097	20943
Mark Agard	3719 Reservoir Rd.	202-422-0123	potomail.com

# PETITION

## DC IMMIGRANT VOTING RIGHTS COALITION

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Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Dante O'Hara	1417 Nardin St NW	760-521-9397	dantehara@gmail.com
Jack Wright	2950 Van Ness St NW	855-943-7115	jackwright2@gmail.com
Zach Lingo	1405 Perry Pl NW, Apt. C	410 718 9427	zlingo19@gmail.com
German Polanco	2700 Connecticut Ave NW	(917) 374 2144	Galdulua2.Polanco@gmail.com
Nancy Shie	1736 Columbia Rd	202-907-689	Nancy Shie
Blanca German	3121 Mt pleasant	202-9102322	
Sonia Benitez	2525 ontario	202-710 3148	
Dayra M. Pula	1460 Irving St NW Apt. 412	Washington, D.C. 20010	202-246-1384
John Christanson	1748 Irving St NW	917-716-4056	
	Wash DC 20010		

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Name	Address	Phone Number	Email
Sara Carothers	1619 Kenyon St <sup>#57</sup>	202 578 7741	sara.carothers@gmail.com
Luke Nogueira	1755 Euclid St NW	202-664-6263	lukenogueira@gmail.com
Ligia Sturman	1519 Park Rd NW, Apt 302	(931) 252 4161 (239)	ligiasturman@gmail.com
Maria Espinoza		281-9736	mariaespinoza@gmail.com
Gordon Kingston	1519 Park Rd NW Apt 302	(904) 716-8274	gordonjkingston@gmail.com
Sarah Fakhr	5230 Georgia Ave NW	646 575 5574	Fakhr.sarah@hotmail.com
Jason Alredge	2401 Ontario Road <sup>Apt</sup> #203	(202) 666-4651	JasonAlredge@gmail.com
Alberto	3802 14th St	(202) 910-2425	
Robert Sturman	1830 Camont St. NW Apt H	865-607-4306	



**B24-0300- SUPPORT**

John Payne - Liaison

Sanctuary DMV

[john.howard.payne@gmail.com](mailto:john.howard.payne@gmail.com) 202-907-5794

**B24-0300-SUPPORT**

**Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021**

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

June 7, 2022

Dear Chairman Allen and members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

My name is John Payne; I am a core organizer with Sanctuary DMV and I'm here today to express our support for the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act. Sanctuary DMV workouts throughout the Washington, Virginia, and Maryland area to help immigrants and immigrant communities build power, stand with individuals and families during immigration proceedings, and advocate for legislation that ensures immigrants are treated with the fairness and dignity they deserve. We are asking DC Council to pass this bill so that our immigrant neighbors can be full partners in this city's democracy. And not only are we asking for this bill to be passed, but to be expanded to include Washington's entire immigrant community and for it to be passed now before the chance of Congressional interference.

Sanctuary DMV believes all people have a right to choose their government and that just because a person was born in another country doesn't mean they aren't affected by the laws and policies of where they live. We know that our immigrant neighbors are impacted by our cities government, whether it's the status of our public transit system, the city's minimum wage laws, and the MPD. But barriers exist to making sure every Washingtonian is a full participant in our shared democracy. They have kids attending DC public school, check out books from libraries, pay taxes to the city, and deserve the same say in how that city is run. And Washington's immigrant communities don't include just green card holders. Our city is enriched by TPS holders, people under DACA, asylees, refugees and more. These individuals and families are often forced into the shadows and denied access to many programs and resources put forth by both DC and the federal government. They are in need of a voice in their city's government most of all. We have worked with many individuals who have suffered through financial hardship from not being able to access DC programs or been harassed by local police, or needed assistance helping growing their business. But just as we have seen them need solidarity in tough times, we've seen how much they care about and give back to this city. That is the primary reasons we're asking you to expand the bill the include ALL non-citizens. To ensure that those have been historically ignored or pushed aside can be heard not just in the streets but also in the voting booth.

Washington's immigrant and migrant communities are already great citizens; invested in the welfare of this city as any other resident. Sanctuary DMV knows from working along these communities how much our immigrant neighbors give back to this city every day. This has been especially true the past several years as Washington's immigrant communities showed up again and again to ensure that our city functioned during the COVID-19 pandemic. They have never stopped working and the very least we can do is ensure they that they have they most basic and fundamental voice in who runs our government. And we are a city that knows more than



**B24-0300- SUPPORT**

John Payne - Liaison

Sanctuary DMV

[john.howard.payne@gmail.com](mailto:john.howard.payne@gmail.com) 202-907-5794

most what it means not to have our voices silenced and be denied a say in our government. As we continue Washington's fight for federal representation, we cannot leave any one behind. Our neighbors deserve to vote and need the council to vote now given the likelihood of a Republican congress in 2023.

In closing, one of the most founding principles of any functioning democracy is that the government is the servant of the people and that the people must have a say in who runs their government. If Washington, DC wants to truly be a sanctuary city, to truly live up to the same ideals that we know gives us the right to statehood, then we have no choice but to ensure that everyone in our city has the representation and voice their local government too.

Sanctuary DMV urges the council to pass Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021.

**Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety**  
**July 7, 2022**  
**Alana Eichner**  
**Ward 1 Resident**  
**Lead Organizer, DC Chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance**

Hello Chairperson Allen and members of the Committee, my name is Alana Eichner. I've been a Ward 1 resident for almost a decade and I am an organizer with the DC Chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance.

I am here to testify in strong support of the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 and I am also here to urge the council to strengthen this legislation to include individuals with DACA, TPS, asylees, and other statuses. I am grateful to Councilmember Nadeau for her leadership in introducing this bill and am glad to see this important bill receive a public hearing today.

The DC Chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance is a local organization comprised of women who clean homes, care for seniors and care for children in the homes of their employers. According to data from the Economic Policy Institute, who did an analysis of 5-year 2019 American Community Survey Microdata, there are 4,646 domestic workers living in DC. The majority of them are women (93%), people of color (88%) and immigrants (55%). Speaking anecdotally about the domestic workers who are involved with our organization, all except for a very small handful are immigrants. The members of our organization come from all over the world – Honduras, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia and almost every country in Latin America, from Jamaica and Trinidad, the Philippines and India. Many took a job doing domestic work as their first job when they arrived in the United States because it is what was available to them as a newly arrived immigrant and many have stayed in that profession for 15, 20 or more years because they love it, they're good at it, and could not see themselves doing something else.

Domestic workers have always been essential, long before that was a popular term in our vocabulary. They have always been the workers who make so much other work possible, by allowing parents to have child care, by giving peace of mind that our elderly relatives are well cared for, or by providing the relief that comes with knowing you will arrive home to a clean home. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many home care workers were the only lifeline to the outside world for seniors and those with disabilities, who were some of the most vulnerable to the pandemic, and nannies took on new and expanded responsibilities to assist with virtual school. If you talk to any of our members who are not citizens, they will tell you how much they pay in taxes and how strongly they know that their work supports our economy and working families in the district. It's wrong that a large percentage of them can't vote in local elections that deeply impact the conditions of their lives, and I am so excited that a solution to remedy that is before us today.

Beyond their work playing an integral role in our economy, many of the members of the DC Chapter of the National Domestic Workers Alliance who are not citizens are already some of the most involved activists in making their voice heard in local issues. They have repeatedly met with council members and testified at the Council multiple times, something that almost none of my friends who are US born citizens who live here have done. Our members are actively fighting for increased labor protections for domestic workers in DC and have successfully fought and won \$75 million over the last three budget cycles for cash assistance for excluded workers who aren't eligible for unemployment and didn't receive stimulus checkers. They knew how much these and other issues decided by the mayor and council impact the lives of themselves and their families, but it isn't fair that they have to work doubly hard for their voices to be heard because they are not able to shape our cities to meet their needs by voting. These are people who deserve a voice in local government. And as connected to local issues as many already are, giving all permanent residents, TPS and DACA holders, asylees, and those with other statuses the right to vote would further deepen these individuals' connection to their own city.

Many of our domestic worker members who are not permanent residents are DACA and TPS holders or are asylees pursuing legal cases because they were victims of gender based violence or labor trafficking. These individuals should not be further marginalized and left out of this promising solution – DC has the chance to enfranchise more people and should take this opportunity. I strongly urge the council to move this bill swiftly and when doing so, strength the bill to include those with DACA and TPS, asylees, and those with other statuses.

Political leaders in DC like to pride themselves on this city being one of the most progressive jurisdictions in the country, including as a place that supports immigrants instead of demonizing them or turning our back on them like many other cities and states and our federal government often does. But there is much more work to go to make this a reality in our policies, and this bill would be a very important next step to achieving what many of us aspire for DC to be. I strongly urge you to move this bill forward as soon as possible so it passes before the end of thi DC Council period.

Hi, my name is Katherine Yon Ebright, and I am a non-profit lawyer, Ward 5 resident, and daughter of a Malaysian immigrant. I'm testifying today because I'm published on the subject of non-citizen voting, comparative law, and human rights law. And I strongly support this Act.

At the start of this hearing, Council Member Charles Allen listed dozens of jurisdictions, in the United States and around the world, that permit permanent residents to vote at the local level, if not the national level. These jurisdictions range from places like Takoma Park and Chevy Chase to Sweden, Estonia, Chile, Malawi, and New Zealand.

These are jurisdictions that take seriously not just the franchise but also what the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and other international experts have referred to as "the right to belong." The right to belong encompasses not only non-citizens' ability to be physically present in a locality but also their ability to participate in the life of that locality — to have a say about how they're represented, how they're accommodated in law and in policy.

D.C. has the opportunity to join these other jurisdictions and to ensure that permanent residents in our communities belong, and belong fully. It has the opportunity to advance human rights locally, even as many of our rights are under attack at the federal level.

On a more personal note, I moved to Ward 5 about 10 months ago, and I had the opportunity to vote in our local primaries just last month. I was able to become a fully integrated member of this community, despite, frankly, my limited time exploring and contributing to it. It makes no sense that I, with less than a year's experience in Ward 5, was able to have a greater say in this community than permanent residents who've lived in and contributed to the Ward for far longer. When we exclude permanent residents from our local elections, we not only prevent people from fully belonging to our communities. We also exclude people's knowledge and experience. It, again, makes no sense.

So I'm excited that the Council is considering non-citizen voting. It's a measure that's long overdue and that would make DC a stronger, more inclusive home.



**July 20, 2022**

**We are writing to the Council of the District of Columbia as Sunrise Movement DC, the local hub of the youth-led Sunrise Movement, a national organization fighting for climate action, racial justice, and a transformation of our shared society.** As young residents of the DC area, we recognize the deep connections among environmental, racial, economic, and housing justice. We remain committed to the vision of a sustainable, affordable, and equitable City where every resident can thrive, not struggle to just survive. Today, we call upon the District to pass the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 to move our City one step closer towards a more inclusive democracy.

**The climate crisis both drives international migration to the United States and disparately impacts immigrants living in cities across the country.** On February 9, 2021, President Biden signed Executive Order 14013, “Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration,” the first time the U.S. Government officially reported on the link between climate change and migration.<sup>1</sup> And, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, those with low income, people with limited English proficiency, and certain immigrant communities face significant social vulnerability in exposure to and resiliency from natural disasters, including floods.<sup>2</sup> Yet immigrant communities in our backyard, many who have fled to the U.S. based on a global climate crisis in large part driven by this country’s national policy, cannot democratically participate in local D.C. elections, which shape the major races and elections which in turn influence D.C.’s climate prevention and adaptation policies. **Sunrise DC recognizes inclusive democratic participation as instrumental to environmental justice**, which centers the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Report-on-the-Impact-of-Climate-Change-on-Migration.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-09/climate-vulnerability\\_september-2021\\_508.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2021-09/climate-vulnerability_september-2021_508.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

DC's lack of statehood compounds this current political disenfranchisement for our diverse immigrant communities. While Congress denies full self-representation to the District, our City cannot in good conscience in turn continue to deny full representative democracy to its own residents within District bounds. **Recognizing the consequential implications of statehood on racial, economic, and environmental justice in the City, Sunrise DC hub members affirm that passing the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 will be one step closer to fulfilling this dream of full autonomy and empowerment for all residents.**

Sincerely, the undersigned members of the hub:

1. Mike Warburton
2. Hannah Shumway
3. Matt Uhalde
4. Ranen Miao
5. Eric Perless
6. Aura Angélica
7. Sam Farooqui
8. Wei Zhou
9. Rob Hofmann
10. Jamieson Davids
11. Fra Santos
12. Kate Finman
13. Gabi Morris-Flores
14. Daniel Kim
15. Rose Ippolito
16. Alida Austin
17. Gabi Morris-Flores
18. Sam Delgado
19. Eric Fowler
20. Juliette Leader
21. Jamie Bindon
22. Leah Barteldes
23. Izzy Harrison
24. Kush Kharod
25. Kaelin Mokadam
26. Maura O'Reilly
27. Wanya Hamlett
28. Daniel Kim
29. Alec Vandenberg
30. Sam Myszkowski

7/7 Testimony on the Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021  
Yannik Omictin, ANC Commissioner, 2A01  
Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you so much for hosting this hearing today. My name is Yannik Omictin, and I'm an ANC Commissioner in Foggy Bottom, single-member district 2A01. I'm sorry I could not join you today - I had an emergency that I needed to address this morning.

I'll keep this very brief: I work, in my ANC capacity and as a neighbor, with a number of immigrant tenants who need help with rental assistance applications and other public benefits. Many have permanent residency and have been in the US for a long time, but have struggled to find economic stability - whether from skyrocketing rents that are only climbing in the wake of the pandemic, wages miscalculated and stolen at their workplace, a lack of easy access to federal public benefits, or a myriad of other challenges.

The solutions that would improve permanent residents' lives - more robust tenant protections, direct cash assistance like universal basic income, greater affordable housing production - are being debated by politicians they have never voted for. They can petition the government, they can organize, they can protest, and certainly many have - they are extraordinarily civically active not by choice, but to survive. But their voice is cut off by the final barrier to full democracy. They can't vote.

We should all be able to have some say in the political decisions that affect us, since they truly affect all of us. We have the power to say that permanent resident non-citizens belong in our democracy by giving them the right to affect the government that affects them, the same right citizens have. We, citizens by birth, are the lucky ones - we just happen to be born here, we never really asked for American citizenship. **They've been building this city alongside us for years - what's the difference between them and us, other than the fact that they happened to be born a little further away?**

Thank you once again to the sponsors of this legislation for bringing it forward today, and to Councilmember Allen for this hearing.

## DC Judiciary Committee Hearing

### Bill B024-300 Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021

July 7, 2022

Statement

By

Lois Athey

I am recommending that the DC Voting Rights amendment bill allow three categories of immigrants – with work permits and all legally authorized to work in the United States – to vote in local elections for the Mayor, City Council, Attorney General, State Board of Education, and ANCs.

The District of Columbia has a sizable community of immigrants, many of whom emigrated from El Salvador. Roughly 14 percent of D.C.'s population was born in another country and foreign-born residents make up a vital, educated share of the District's labor force. 5,452 immigrant business owners accounted for 16 percent of all self-employed D.C. residents in 2018 and generated \$145 million in business income. Nearly three-fifths of immigrants in D.C. possess a college or higher degree.

As neighbors, business owners, taxpayers, and workers, immigrants are an integral part of D.C.'s diverse and thriving communities and make extensive contributions that benefit all.

While two fifths of all DC immigrants are naturalized citizens, many others with work permits are not US citizens. Many fall into other categories, such as permanent residents (LPR), Temporary Protected Status (TPS) or "Dreamers" (DACA-Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

These residents, many of whom are essential workers or business owners, deserve a say in local government. Their children attend our schools, their jobs require them to treat patients in our hospitals, their construction skills build our high rises and housing complexes. They are lawyers, accountants, teachers, doctors and they also clean our buildings and collect our trash. And most importantly they should be able to contribute to our democratic voting system. Citizenship status may be a goal in the future, but the federal immigration system is broken. Why force these residents, many of whom have lived here for decades, to not be franchised. We, the citizens of Washington DC, want our immigrant neighbors to be fully participatory in our city and its future.

Over ten other cities and localities, including Takoma Park, Maryland and New York City have passed local voting laws to empower their immigrant residents. Let's make the District of Columbia the next city in the United States to show its support for our immigrant brothers and sisters.

To be a fully designated Sanctuary city, I urge the DC City Council to pass the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Bill.

June 11, 2022

Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Councilmembers of the Committee on the Judiciary & Public Safety:

I am testifying in favor of the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021” as a member of the Claudia Jones School for Political Education and a resident of Ward 2 in DC.

As a volunteer organizer involved in community service work with local noncitizen residents, I strongly believe that all of the city’s permanent residents deserve political representation immediately. Many of the residents I work with have lived in DC for longer than I have been alive. They work here, are subject to the same laws, pay taxes, send their children to our local DC schools. And yet, they still have no political voice or means to advocate for their own interests in government in the place they have called home for years. And with permanent noncitizen residents comprising around 1 in 14 residents in the country, this is no small or insignificant voting block.

Those who argue these residents should “just become citizens” may not understand the barriers to naturalization they face. Wait times for USCIS to process applications have doubled in the past 6 years. Fees are almost \$700, even as the poverty rate for noncitizens stands 10% higher than that of native citizens. The test that applicants are expected to pass in English language and U.S. history and government is far more rigorous than what a public school education in the U.S. would provide. And rates of naturalization in this country lag far behind any other comparable nation.

If you have not heard from other sources, noncitizen voting is nowhere near prohibited by the Constitution, and up until the 20’s, at least 40 states had freely allowed permanent non-citizens to vote. The Post-WWI change was motivated at heart by xenophobic sentiments and desires to expel non-white groups from the country, which unfortunately seem to reappear in new forms in many of the most vitriolic arguments against noncitizen voting rights.

On a personal level, I think about Julia, one of the residents I work with. I recently met her daughter, who is about the same age as me, but unlike me, grew up in this city. She told me about her memories of attending Cardozo High School, picnicking in Rock Creek Park, and learning how to walk on the steps of Julia’s Columbia Heights area apartment. The fact that I, having moved here a year ago for work, have a voice in choosing local officials and laws and yet Julia does not makes no sense to me at all.

Lastly, I see no difference between the noncitizens this bill advocates for and other residents with DACA, TPS, or asylee status. I urge you to consider all of our neighbors and fellow residents currently living without a political voice in DC and to give them the right to vote so that we can all live in a more enfranchised and popularly represented city.

Sincerely,

Cybele Mayes-Osterman

[cybelemayesosterman@gmail.com](mailto:cybelemayesosterman@gmail.com)

505-702-6900



21 July 2022

Council of the District of Columbia  
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY & PUBLIC SAFETY  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004

Councilmembers Allen, Bonds, Cheh, Grey, and Pinto,

The League of Women Voters DC is pleased to submit this testimony in favor of B24-0300, the Local Resident Voting Rights Act. As an organization committed to empowering voters and supporting voting rights, we are excited to see this voting bill before the DC Council.

One has to acknowledge how parallel this is vis a vis our plea for Full Rights For DC and DC Statehood. How can we then repeat the same exclusion of those, who like us, are taxed without representation?

We know better than most that the ability to vote for leaders who reflect our values guards against discrimination and bias. This legislation will give more voice in the laws and policies that affect us all, expand the voting base, and encourage a more inclusive and representative government responsive to our community's views and needs.

Noncitizens serve in the military, own property, pay taxes, send children to our schools, and contribute to our economy in many ways and thus should have a voice in local government. All DC residents are equally affected by policies and actions of District government regardless of citizenship status. Noncitizen school children as well as citizen children of noncitizen parents are affected by policies established by our public, charter and private school boards.

While we know approximately one in seven DC residents is an immigrant, we could not find statistics of how many of these foreign born people are not yet citizens and would become eligible voters if/when this bill is enacted.<sup>1</sup>

Several League of Women Voters units across the country have conducted studies on issues of immigration and voting rights. Notably in 2013, LWV Boulder, Colorado

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-washington-dc>

began researching voting rights for noncitizens and in 2020, the Colorado League adopted a position in favor of “inclusion of certain noncitizens residing in Boulder County, in some of our local democratic processes, at the county, municipal, school district, and special district level.”<sup>2</sup>

Additionally, noncitizen voting is not a new concept to our neighbors in Maryland. All residents 16 years of age or older currently have the right to vote in local elections in Takoma Park<sup>3</sup>, Mount Rainier<sup>4</sup>, and Hyattsville<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, a large city with a rich history and diverse population, San Francisco, California, allows noncitizens to vote in school board elections<sup>6</sup>.

In addition to green card holders, we encourage the addition of immigrants granted asylum (not yet eligible for green card but unable to return to their home country), naturalization applicants, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status) residents to the list of those eligible to vote in DC local elections.

Education is going to be key in implementing the Local Resident Voting Rights Act as it is in any new practice or change in elections and voting.<sup>7</sup> A critical point which should be shared with all noncitizens interested in registering to vote is that this may have some implications for their current immigration status or path toward citizenship. The website for the Board of Elections for the City and County of San Francisco emphasizes this issue while educating noncitizens about their rights to register to vote. It clearly states,

“Any information you provide to the Department of Elections... may be obtained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other agencies, organizations, and individuals. In addition, if you apply for

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<sup>2</sup> League of Women Voters of Boulder County. “Noncitizen Rights in Boulder County.” League of Women Voters of Boulder County. Accessed July 20, 2022. [https://www.lwvbc.org/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=629866&module\\_id=395947](https://www.lwvbc.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=629866&module_id=395947).

<sup>3</sup> Non-Citizen Registration and Voting. “Registration and Voting Information.” City of Takoma Park, Maryland. Accessed July 20, 2022. <https://takomaparkmd.gov/news/city-election-information/register-to-vote/>.

<sup>4</sup> City of Mount Rainier, Maryland. “2021 City Election.” City Elections. Accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.mountrainiermd.org/government/city-elections>.

<sup>5</sup> City of Hyattsville, Maryland. “Voter Information.” Elections. Accessed July 21, 2022. <https://www.hyattsville.org/881/Voter-Information>.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Elections. “Non-Citizen Registration and Voting.” City and County of San Francisco. Accessed July 20, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Gathright, Jenny. “D.C. Council Once Again Considers Letting Non-Citizens Vote In Local Elections.” NPR.org. Accessed July 20, 2022. <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2021/06/11/1005274621/d-c-council-once-again-considers-letting-non-citizens-vote-in-local-elections.x>

naturalization, you will be asked whether you have ever registered or voted in a federal, state, or local election in the United States. You may wish to consult with an immigration attorney, an organization that protects immigrant rights, or other knowledgeable source before providing any personal information to the Department of Elections and before registering to vote in San Francisco Board of Education Elections.”<sup>8</sup>

Noncitizens who wish to register and participate in our local elections should do so with easily accessible resources to make informed decisions and act with full knowledge of potential implications.

Therefore it is critical to engage with community organizations and agencies working with non-citizens in the District as well as those in jurisdictions who already have non-citizen voting in place to prepare materials. This cannot be left solely to our Board of Elections. While we recognize that other jurisdictions’ Boards of Elections may administer municipal, county and/or national elections, we still have much to learn from those who have implemented similar legislation. Preparing these materials should be done by experts in communications and graphics and designed with input from the DC BOE and those who have knowledge and understanding of cultural idiosyncrasies that may be important for understanding the how, when and why one can now vote, along with assurances about safety from deportation or loss or change of status.

Our democracy is stronger when more people participate. Passage of this bill which gives voice to all our residents will build a stronger, more representative community. DC will continue to be a leader in voting rights.

We applaud the Council’s efforts to bring noncitizen voting to our District. As a century-old, trusted nonpartisan organization with the mission to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy, LWVDC welcomes working with you for increased voter participation for the people of what we hope will soon be Douglass Commonwealth.



Kathy P Chiron  
President  
League of Women Voters DC

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<sup>8</sup><https://sfelections.sfgov.org/non-citizen-registration-and-voting>

Written Testimony from Peter Wood (ANC 1C03) in Support of B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”

July 7, 2022

Chair Allen and fellow Judiciary and Public Safety Committee members:

I write you to share my support for B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”, and urge you to pass this important legislation in a timely manner.

Like many ANC Commissioners, I represent a great number of constituents who either possess permanent residency in the United States or are pursuing this status. Let my testimony reflect what they repeatedly tell me: being able to participate in local elections is the bare minimum DC government can offer to demonstrate fair, just treatment of all its residents.

While I was coincidentally born on US soil, I have experienced the US immigration system from various perspectives. One of those includes as sponsor for a migrant DC resident applying for permanent residency. Additionally, I have consoled, discussed with, or guided many friends, relatives, and neighbors on the stresses of migrating to the US. Despite being an incredibly diverse group, one common theme nearly unanimously defined all our conversations—migrating to the United States is one of the most tiring, infuriating, dehumanizing experiences they have ever encountered. We as DC elected officials have an obligation to begin undoing some of this harm.

If anyone should empathize with the importance of fair representation in elections it is the people of Washington, DC. Permanent residents contribute to our city as much as or more than their counterparts with US citizenship, whether through taxes, business operations, civic engagement, or simply being responsible neighbors. But being an exemplary resident should not be the standard for determining one’s worthiness of participation in the electoral process. The fact that an individual exists and is directly affected by decisions made by elected officials is reason enough to allow and encourage them to vote.

For this legislation to be effective, I further support investment in educational and informational programs which would alert current and prospective green card holders of their rights as an elector. I also encourage Council to harness the widespread support for this bill and work toward expanding similar rights to other groups, including but not limited to beneficiaries of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Previous iterations of this bill have been met with concerns of timing and the logistical difficulty of implementing the changes it entails. Rather than a call to defeat, these concerns ought to be treated as an impetus for working ever more vigilantly toward implementation. Elected officials earn such credentials because of voters casting ballots. Let’s make sure the pathway to doing so is inviting and encourages even more robust involvement with local governance.

Peter Wood  
ANC 1C03



# Mary's Center

Quality healthcare. Stronger communities.

**Testimony for**

**Council Bill 24-0300**

**July 20, 2022**

**Submitted By**

**Fernanda Ruiz**

**Home Visiting Director**

**Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care, Inc.**

**to**

**Council of the District of Columbia**

Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20004

July 20, 2022

Dear Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Fernanda Ruiz, and I am the Home Visiting Director at Mary's Center and a District resident from Ward 4. I am also a daughter, immigrant, friend, social worker, triathlete and an active member of my community. I write today to express my strong support of B24-0300, or the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 and the extension of local voting rights to permanent residents.

Community is a core value to me. I am fortunate to be part of a thriving community such as the District of Columbia. In 2006 I moved from my home country Mexico to the United States. Since then, I have been a proud resident of the District of Columbia and an active member of my community.

Also in 2006, I joined Mary's Center and my first role was as a home visitor supporting new and expecting parents, providing care coordination, linkages to community resources and supporting them with navigating the health care system. As a home visitor, I had the opportunity to visit the home of families across the District and every Ward. I learned of the strong safety net the District provides to its residents and the vast community resources available. It was a great introduction to the community that 16 years later I call home.

Now as Home Visiting Director, I have the opportunity to continue to contribute to families' wellbeing across the District through the strategy of home visiting. I am passionate about preventing child abuse and neglect, improving maternal child health outcomes, and promoting school readiness. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the community that welcomed me and has given me so many opportunities to grow.

Outside of my work, I also get involved in my community by participation in a District based triathlon team called GRIT USA, making almost daily use of DC Parks and Recreation facilities, and being a homeowner in Ward 4 since 2017. However, due to my permanent resident status as an immigrant, I am limited in my contributions to my community by not being able to vote in local elections and actively participate in selecting our representatives.

My entire adult life has been shaped by my experiences as a District resident and I want to continue to be involved in my community at a larger level. Voting in support of Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 (B24-0300), would allow me and other permanent residents to participate in local elections and choose representatives that represent our interests and those of our community.

I know a number of our participants that like me, are deeply invested in the community of DC and should have the right to vote and participate in the electoral process. We serve our population without regard to immigration status, and I know from my experiences working directly with parents across the District, that this will open doors for many residents.

Other jurisdictions have supported similar efforts expanding voting registration eligibility to include certain non-citizens. Some examples include Connecticut, Delaware,<sup>1</sup> and certain jurisdictions in Maryland.

Thank you very much for your attention and time. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss the impact of this legislation.

Fernanda Ruiz  
Home Visiting Director  
Mary's Center  
202-413-0970  
fruiz@maryscenter.org

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/non-resident-and-non-citizen-voting.aspx>



# Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

*“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”*

August 1, 2022

Councilmember Charles Allen  
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 110  
Washington, DC 20004  
[callen@dccouncil.us](mailto:callen@dccouncil.us)

**RE: DC Council Bill B24-0300 – the “Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021”**

Dear Councilmember Allen,

At its regular meeting on July 20, 2022, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A (“**ANC 2A**” or “**Commission**”) considered the above-referenced matter. With seven of seven commissioners present, a quorum at a duly-noticed public meeting, the Commission voted unanimously (**7-0-0**), after a motion made by Commissioner Patel and seconded by Commissioner Causey, to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, one in seven DC residents is an immigrant, about one in nine residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent, one in six DC workers is an immigrant, and they contribute more than a billion dollars in taxes,

WHEREAS, immigrants account for one in six of all self-employed DC residents, immigrants generate more than a \$140 million in DC business income each year, and DC residents in immigrant-led households have more than \$3 billion in spending power,

WHEREAS, in 2018, DC was home to 50,612 women, 40,673 men, and 6,561 children who were immigrants. The top countries of origin for immigrants were El Salvador (eleven percent of immigrants), Ethiopia (seven percent), Mexico (three percent), Trinidad & Tobago (three percent), and China (three percent),

WHEREAS, it is unclear exactly how many DC residents are green card holders, however based on data from the Migration Policy Institute, out of 85,333 immigrants in DC in 2019, 51.3% or 43,781 were “noncitizens.” To add on, 10% of the city’s population is foreign-born, and as of 2018, immigrants accounted for 17% of the DC labor force, and

WHEREAS, many of those immigrants and many green card holders have been lawful residents for a significant time. As of 2018, almost 20% of the immigrants living in DC were eligible for naturalization.



# Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A

*“Serving the Foggy Bottom and West End communities of Washington, D.C.”*

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that ANC 2A urges the passage and implementation of DC Council Bill B24-0300 – the “Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021.”

Commissioners Trupti Patel ([2A03@anc.dc.gov](mailto:2A03@anc.dc.gov)) and Joel Causey ([2A02@anc.dc.gov](mailto:2A02@anc.dc.gov)) are the Commission’s representatives in this matter.

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION.

Sincerely,

Joel Causey  
Chairperson

Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20004

July 20, 2022

Dear Chair Allen and Members of the Committee,

We represent five community-based organizations located in Ward 1 of the District of Columbia and write today to express our fervent support of B24-0300, or the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 and the extension of local voting rights to permanent residents. Existing federal and local laws preclude many of our longtime neighbors and community members from fully participating in our democratic systems, which directly undermines their ability to influence many of the institutions that have the most significant impacts on their lives and those of their children. District residents have a right to self-determination and, as such, should be able to select their community leaders. The Council should also explore avenues to extend suffrage to additional excluded groups including, but not limited to, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

It is difficult to gauge how many District residents will become enfranchised as a result of the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act but, as service providers, we know that many of our neighbors are vital members of our communities whose voices are intentionally stifled when it comes to their representation, and thus myriad decisions that impact their daily lives. We see daily the impacts of denying constituents their rights as active citizens who work, live, study, create and contribute to our diverse community. The District can formally include many of these community members in our democratic processes, and in conversations on many of the difficult issues facing us today, including healthcare, education, housing, youth development, employment and more. The enfranchisement of lawfully present residents is a critical step in the walk towards addressing disparities across the District, particularly among Black and Brown residents.

Given the District's shared experiences of disenfranchisement, we know how important it is to advocate for full representation. On behalf of the many constituents who participate in our programs, live in our neighborhoods and are a vital part of the rich cultural and social vitality of our community, we strongly urge the Committee to advance the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment and we believe that the Council should pass B24-0300 and extend the right to vote in local elections. Thank you for your leadership on this important human rights issue, and for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact any one of us to discuss the impacts of this legislation.

Sincerely,



Jim Knight  
President and CEO, Jubilee Housing



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Maureen Lallos Dwyer  
Executive Director, Sitar Arts Center



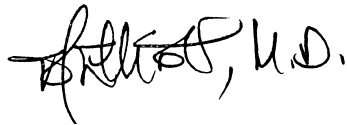
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Dee Dee Parker Wright  
Executive Director, Jubilee JumpStart



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Judy Estey  
Executive Director, The Platform of Hope



Tollie B. Elliott, Sr.  
Chief Executive Officer, Mary's Center

Dear Council,

My name is Arin Owens, and I am hereby testifying and demanding that the Council support this legislation, B24-0300, “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021,” that enables green card holding permanent residents their right to vote in *their* elections. In considering the economic facts first, D.C. immigrant-led households paid approximately \$932 million in federal taxes, \$417 million in state and local taxes, and in 2018, maintained \$3 billion in spending power. Additionally, 16% of all self-employed D.C. residents in 2018 alone were/are immigrant-led, accounting for \$145 million in income. This is not insignificant. If taxes are defined by a compulsory contribution to state revenue in order to support and expand government services—including all of whom serve taxpayers—then by that definition, non-citizen permanent residents should have the right to vote, given their extremely large contribution to the tax revenue base. This is to say little on the fact that approximately 20% of D.C. immigrants are eligible for naturalization and are only not so due to barriers such as the \$725 fee and numerous other problems such as the extensive U.S. Immigration Services backlogs.

My family and I were originally born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but moved to Arlington, VA for most of the last decade—and most recently relocated to Fort Washington, MD. During this time, we have befriended many immigrants who live in D.C. and have for many years, and not only significantly contribute to the broad D.C. economy and beyond, but make significant contributions to their local communities via cultural enrichment, volunteering, and by sharing knowledge of their own experiences abroad. A personal friend of mine, Ahmed, who has family in the Middle East, has spent the last fifteen to twenty years in this area, working in the furniture industry, loyally and reliably paying taxes, and contributing to his community—but has no say in how *his* community functions. This relationship is explicitly exploitative and runs counter to how the large majority of D.C. residents want their communities to operate.

This lack of representation is a blight upon D.C. and the surrounding communities at large, and I would take it even one step further and advocate for the inclusion of both DACA and Temporary Protected Status individuals. Those in these specific programs likewise work and contribute both economically and culturally to our city, and as the privileged beneficiaries of their residence, must advocate and support for them to be able to influence their local elections in the same way as full citizens do. In closing, we have a responsibility to resolve this immoral and unethical socioeconomic imbalance and ensure that all residents of our communities are properly represented and establish their right to participate in their local elections as they rightfully deserve.

Thank you,

Arin S. Owens

Dear DC Council,

Hello, my name is Rose Ippolito and I have been an organizer with Sunrise DC for over a year. I'm providing this testimony because choosing elected officials is a fundamental right for *everyone*, and we can get there through passing the Local Residents Voting Rights Bill. I am urging Council to pass this bill and to add the granting of voting rights to non-citizens such as TPS, DACA, Asylees, and more. I have seen time and time again how local elections - both of officials and policies like referendums and initiatives - impact the daily life, well-being, and health of DC residents, regardless of their immigration status. These impacts range from the quality and affordability of housing to exposure to or protection from environmental hazards and the consequences of climate change to access to safe and nutritious food to educational quality. All those impacted by these policies deserve a say in these policies.

As the DC license plates proclaim, "no taxation without representation." While the fight for political representation on the federal level is still a fight on the national level for DC residents, those who are considered "noncitizens" also do not have local representation. Despite this, immigrant-led households in DC paid over \$930 million in federal taxes and \$416 million in state and local taxes in 2018. Immigrants are a vital part of our communities; they are neighbors, teachers, business owners, healthcare and other essential workers, friends, family, and of course humans who deserve the same rights as citizens. Although I am not an immigrant, I know and love immigrants and am in full and enthusiastic support of this bill. I believe a multiracial democracy is a vital component of the movement for a stronger, healthier, most resilient society.

The time to grant this fundamental right is now, especially with the threat of Republican obstruction due to the midterm federal elections this November. There are many examples of the US' immigration system being inefficient and inequitable (e.g., a \$725 fee to apply for citizenship, a backlog of up to 1 million cases), but DC Councilmembers have the power to lessen the inequities that result from this system by supporting noncitizens through the Local Residents Voting Rights Bill. Please take this step forward towards racial and economic justice in the District.

Thank you,  
Rose Ippolito

Dear Councilmembers:

My name is Kate Finman, and I am a Ward 6 resident calling on you to support the [Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021](#), introduced by Councilmember Brianne Nadeau. This bill embodies our DC values of democracy, inclusivity, and community, and its passage will create a meaningful, positive impact for our city and our over 94,000 immigrant neighbors.<sup>1</sup> Your constituents – citizen and non-citizen – are counting on your support.

Citizenship status has no correlation with how much someone is impacted by laws the Council passes. Non-citizens in DC send their children to be educated at our schools, depend on public transportation systems and amenities, and own an estimated 16% of small businesses that all DC residents rely on.<sup>2</sup> They pay taxes – in 2018, non-U.S. citizens in DC paid an estimated \$416,900,000 in local taxes<sup>3</sup> – which funded services and programs for all DC residents. Yet, the disenfranchisement DC immigrants face gives them no representation during the legislative process, where decisions about their community are made. Their lack of electoral power disincentivizes local public officials and government agencies from valuing their concerns, needs, and opinions, since they are not a part of the voter base. By supporting the Local Residents Voting Rights bill, you can correct this cruel disenfranchisement.

The citizenship process of the United States is unnecessarily laborious, expensive, slow, and inaccessible. It's racist and xenophobic, and DC's current law that only people who have managed to navigate these processes or been born in a specific place can vote upholds these evils – something we cannot let stand. I understand that it is not in your jurisdiction to reform the U.S. citizenship process as city councilmembers, but it is in your jurisdiction to ensure that DC itself is just and democratic. The only choice is voting YES on the Local Residents Voting Rights bill.

As DC residents, we know that old, racist laws disenfranchising our community is wrong. We feel the impacts daily of our lack of statehood federally in our personal lives and in our neighborhoods, and we have come together to fight for voting rights. Yet, we currently subject our non-citizen neighbors to the same excluded fate locally. It is hypocritical to support DC statehood yet disenfranchise locally on the basis of where someone was born or what federal paperwork and tests they have taken. Before this bill goes to a final vote, other immigrants, including DACA recipients, asylees and refugees, undocumented people, and folks with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) should be included, and you must vote wholeheartedly in favor of this bill. The federal government cannot decide who is a part and who is excluded from the DC voting community – DC is for everybody.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=immigrants%20in%20dc&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP02>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-washington-dc>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-washington-dc>

Regardless of their voting power, non-citizens are your constituents too. As a local elected official, it is your responsibility to represent your constituents – both citizen and non-citizen – by voting YES on the Local Voting Rights Amendment Act. Everyone who lives in DC deserves the right to vote in DC, regardless of where they were born. I look forward to seeing you exhibit DC values of democracy, neighborliness, and justice by voting YES on the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act and making it as inclusive as possible.

Sincerely,  
Your Neighbor,  
Kate Finman  
628-400-2443



**Friday, July 1, 2022**

**Jesus “Jesse” Garcia  
District of Columbia State Director  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
1201 7<sup>th</sup> St NW #201  
Washington DC 20001**

**Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20004**

**Dear Committee Members,**

I am writing in support of B24-0300, Local Resident Voting Rights Acts of 2021.

The League of United Latin American Citizens, the oldest and largest Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States, has an active delegation in the [District of Columbia](#) with local councils advocating for Latino civil rights since 1965. To date, we have seven councils with more than 200 members: [Council 11041](#) (the Original Council), [Council 11123](#) (American University Council), [Council 11125](#) (LGBTQ Council), [Council 11128](#) (George Washington University Council), [Council 11129](#) (Young Professionals Council), [Council 17002](#) (Haynes High School Council) and a new council at [Georgetown University](#).

On April 2, 2022, our state membership voted to endorse a resolution entitled “Resolution in Support of Expanding the Vote in the District of Columbia” at our state convention held at Cleveland Park Library. Our resolution calls for voting privileges to be extended to immigrants in local elections of the District of Columbia. As a result, DC LULAC fully supports the bill before your committee meeting on July 7, 2022, “B24-0300 - Local Resident Voting Rights Act of 2021” which would expand the definition of the term qualified elector to include permanent residents for the purpose of local elections. Below is the DC LULAC resolution, which includes our statements we would like to enter into the record:

**Resolution in Support of Expanding the Vote in the District of Columbia**

SPONSORED BY: LULAC Council 11125  
Approved by LULAC Council 11125 on March 16, 2022  
Approved by DC LULAC on April 2, 2022

**Background:** In 2022, 14 U.S. jurisdictions are allowing non-citizens to vote in local elections: New York City, Winooski and Montpelier in Vermont, San Francisco (school board only), and 11 cities in Maryland. Additionally, the U.S. territories of American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands also allow non-citizen U.S. nationals to cast ballots in local elections. Currently, D.C. Councilmember Brianne Nadeau (D-Ward 1) has re-introduced a bill that would allow non-citizens to vote in local D.C. elections. The bill would expand voting eligibility to legal permanent residents — Green Card-holders — and would apply to the elections for Mayor, D.C. Council, State Board of Education, Advisory Neighborhood Commissions, and Attorney General.

**WHEREAS** LULAC encourages Latinos to vote, run for office and take part in political discourse;  
and

**WHEREAS** More state legislators across the country introduce bills to suppress votes of their most marginalized residents, here in the District of Columbia we march in the opposite direction by expanding our democracy; and

**WHEREAS** More than 43,000 individuals in the District of Columbia are non-citizens<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** Immigrants (both naturalized and non-citizen) make up 15 percent of DC's population and have contributed to the demographic, economic, and cultural growth of our nation's capital<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** Immigrant-led households in D.C. paid \$1.2 billion in federal taxes and \$481.1 million in state and local taxes in 2019<sup>3</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** Salvadorans remain the largest single immigrant group by region in the District of Columbia<sup>4</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** Millions of undocumented immigrants, including 10,500 or 2.7 percent of the workforce in the District of Columbia, were on the front lines working to keep Americans safe, healthy, and supported during the coronavirus pandemic<sup>5</sup> while a majority of America teleworked from the safety of their homes; and

**WHEREAS** Legal permanent residents pay taxes, but cannot currently vote and do not serve on juries; and

**WHEREAS** Every day, elected officials are making decisions about affordable housing, education, human services and more, and people who have made their permanent homes here should have a hand in who represents; and

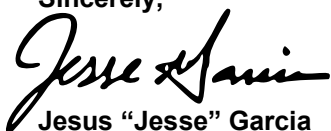
**WHEREAS** The District of Columbia has long been a place that has welcomed immigrants into our community, and it's time to allow for their full participation in our institutions; and

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the League of United Latin American Citizens affirms its support of "Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021" which extends voting privileges to immigrants to local elections of the District of Columbia; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that DC LULAC will help register eligible immigrant and U.S. citizens voters.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to enter this statement into the record. If you have any questions for LULAC District of Columbia, you can reach me at [jessegarcia@lulac.org](mailto:jessegarcia@lulac.org).

Sincerely,



Jesus "Jesse" Garcia  
State Director  
LULAC District of Columbia  
Ward 2 - DC Registered Voter

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<sup>1</sup> Migration Policy (2019). [Migration Policy Institute tabulations of the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey \(ACS\) and Decennial Census](#).

<sup>2</sup> Urban Institute (2018). [State of Immigrants in the District of Columbia](#)

<sup>3</sup> New American Economy (2022). [Immigrants and the Economy in the District of Columbia](#)

<sup>4</sup> American Immigration Council (2020). [Facts Sheets: Immigrants in the District of Columbia](#)

<sup>5</sup> Center for American Progress (2020). [Protecting Undocumented Workers on the Pandemic's Front Lines](#)

Dear Councilmembers,

My name is Sauleh Siddiqui, and I am a US Citizen and ANC Commissioner for 3C05.

I'm submitting this written testimony in support of the Local Residents Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021 because I first moved to DC on a student visa, then work visa, and then a Green Card. Most of my life in DC has been spent as a non-US citizen. People like me who call DC home but don't get to take part in our democracy deserve the right to choose their elected officials.

I'm demanding Council to grant green card-holding permanent residents (as well as non-citizens) their right to vote in our elections. Council should also add non-citizens such as DACA, TPS, Asylees, and other statuses to this bill. You should also pass it before the end of the year to prevent Republican obstruction.

If you would like to see people like me be included in our city and eventually serve the city as I have, then you must pass this bill. It's essential for a functioning democracy and not passing it runs into the danger of us becoming fascists.

Sauleh

Sauleh Siddiqui  
Commissioner, ANC 3C05

Good afternoon,

I am a DC resident writing in strong support of B24-0300, the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021.

I watched the hearing of this bill and I agree with the many witnesses who talked about the importance of giving voice and representation to legal permanent residents residing in DC. Laws and governance of our city impacts them and they deserve to have a say.

Some points I would reiterate:

- I support the expansion of the bill to include DACA, TPS, and asylum seekers.
- The DC Council should pass this bill as expeditiously as possible. One speaker made the great point that it should be passed before there might be Republican Congress that could block this legislation.

I urge you to send this bill to the full DC Council and pass it as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Zachary Ferguson  
Washington, DC  
(202) 750-0740

*TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
ON*

**B24-0300, the “Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2021”**

*July 7, 2022*

STATEMENT OF Monica H. Evans, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA BOARD OF ELECTIONS

Good afternoon Chairman Allen and members of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety and staff. I am Monica Evans, the Executive Director of the DC Board of Elections. As you know, the Board of Elections or BOE takes no position on pending legislation. I am here to provide commentary and discuss the impact that the Local Resident Voting Rights Amendment Act will have on BOE.

In 2020, over 700,000 individuals obtained legal permanent residence in the United States. Even though the number of legal permanent residents in the District of Columbia is significantly lower, the proposed legislation would expand the term “qualified elector” to include permanent residents for the purpose of local elections in the District.

The passage of this legislation will create some logistical challenges for BOE. In many ways, DC is uniquely situated. For purposes of voting, BOE assumes the responsibilities of state and local entities. We function as a state, a county, and as a city in some instances. Our neighbor, Takoma Park Maryland, allows non-citizens to vote in local elections. However, they are only responsible for conducting a local city election. Takoma Park does not administer county, state, or federal elections.

If the legislation passes, our first task would be to create a new voter registration form or modify our existing form. This process will involve entities other than BOE. We would need to change our online forms and work with DMV and other Voter Registration Agencies that register District residents to modify their systems and processes. These entities are uniquely positioned to answer questions about the costs and processes to update their systems. However, in the past we were told DMV would need approximately \$300,000 to update the voter registration form in their system to remove the inquiry about incarceration.

As for BOE, we would need to work directly with our voter registration vendor to modify our existing registration database. Our current database is currently hard-coded to allow data entry of US Citizens only. The modified database would also allow us to convert voters from a “non-citizen” status to a “citizen” status as individuals become naturalized citizens. Depending on the implementation timeline, additional costs may be between \$150,000 and \$250,000. We will also need to implement list maintenance procedures that will address the addition of non-citizens. As you know our membership in the Electronic Registration Information Center or ERIC assists us with list maintenance efforts. However, ERIC does not receive data regarding permanent residents. Therefore, we would need to examine a list maintenance process that does not include ERIC.

The number of ballot styles will also increase. For a general election, we have a ballot style for each ANC/SMD contest. This number will double if we are required to create a ballot for local contests that eliminates the non-local contests.

As you know, HAVA funding may only be used for the administration of federal elections. If this legislation passes, we will be required to prorate some of our elections expenditures. Presently, our primary and general elections always contain at least one federal contest on every ballot. Therefore, HAVA funding may be used to support these elections. If we routinely incur costs that only support local elections, our accounting and time reporting processes may need to be modified to properly track federal and non-federal expenditures more closely.

The mail house we use to create and process our mail-in ballots will incur additional costs. The mail house would need to program its equipment to produce additional ballot styles that only contain local contests. The cost of this reprogramming and the cost of mailing additional ballots is to be determined.

Logistically, we will need to develop a process to code ballots of citizens and non-citizens differently. We will need a process that identifies these ballots and allows them to be tracked. The equipment that scans and tabulates mail-in ballots will need to be modified to allow for such tracking.

In addition to the funding I have already mentioned, BOE will incur other expenditures to implement the legislation. At a minimum, we would need funding to launch an aggressive education and outreach campaign. We will need

money to update voter registration forms and generate voter registration cards. Further, we will need to be staffed to ensure the proper and full implementation of the proposed legislation.

Please note, there are several proposed election-related legislative changes that will go into effect for the 2024 election cycle. As you review these legislative proposals, we ask that you consider a reasonable timeline for BOE's implementation.

In closing, Chairman Allen, I want to once again emphasize the fact that we take no position regarding the merits of specific legislation. As a customer service agency, BOE is committed to administering elections and delivering quality services to all voters. We seek to maintain the integrity of every election within the parameters set before us. If this legislation passes, we ask that our comments be considered and adequate resources be provided in order to ensure proper implementation. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have at this time.